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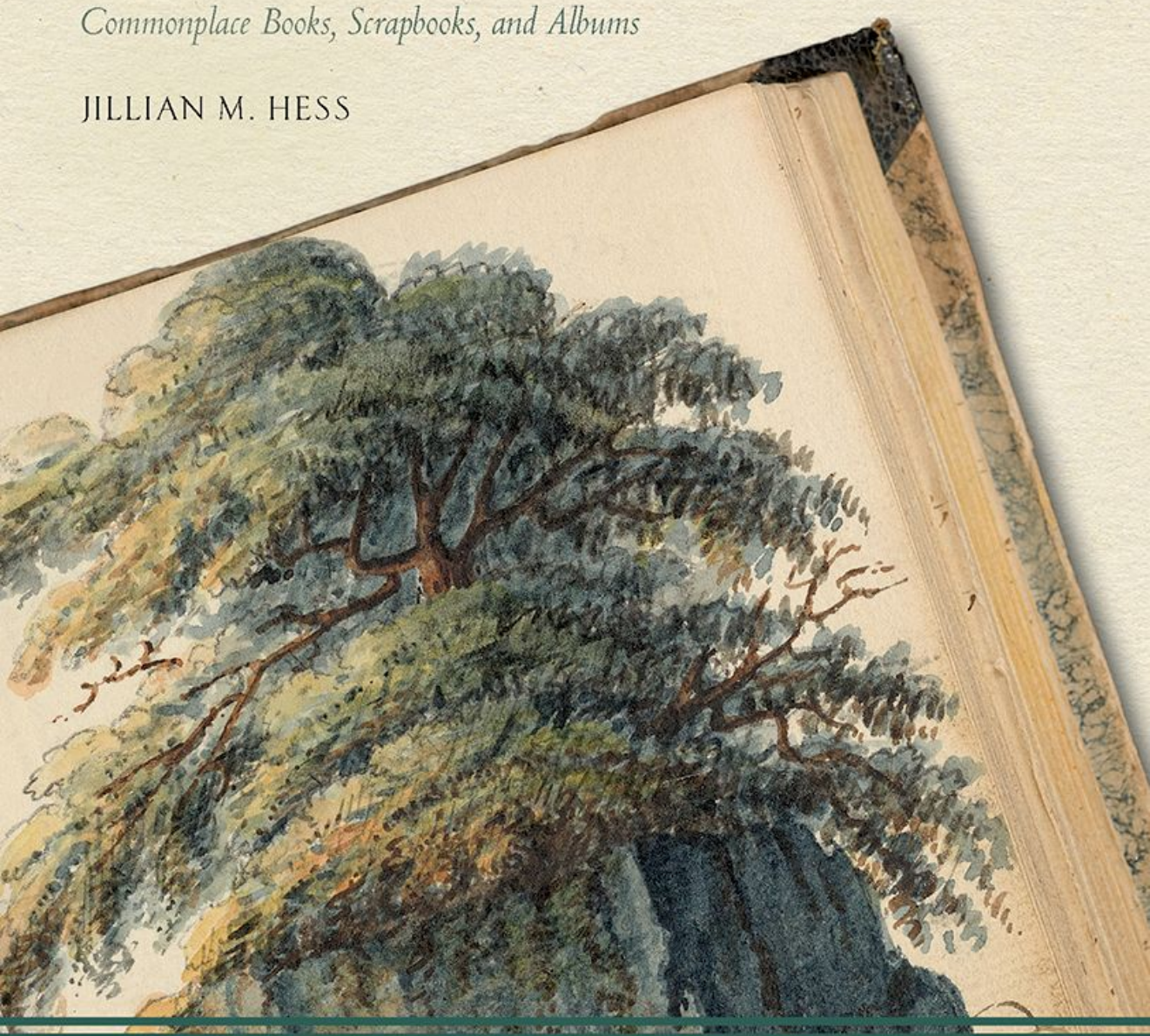
How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information

Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums

JILLIAN M. HESS



OXFORD TEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

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GENERAL EDITORS

Elaine Treharne Greg Walker

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Dedicated to the memory of my grandmothers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I began my first commonplace book as a teenager. Of course, I had no idea I was participating in an ancient tradition, but once I learned about commonplacing, I immediately recognized the impulse to save excerpts in a book of my own. I felt, much like John Hamilton Reynolds (discussed in Chapter 5), that in opening these pages, I was entering a party of ideas, populated by my favorite authors. Once I began my dissertation, I started a different series of commonplace books—organized around the chapters I planned to write and the themes I hoped to explore. As I sat down to finish this manuscript, I returned to my notebooks from the past decade. Reading through them, I remembered not just the reading I had done but the many conversations I had while working on this book. Pages are filled with quotations, but they also include advice from teachers, suggestions from colleagues, tips from librarians, and notes from conferences. I came to think of my acknowledgments page as a living bibliography, because, while the lists of published texts and archived manuscripts at the back of this book support my arguments, the people listed here are by far the more foundational. Their insights, encouragement, generosity, and intellectual engagement shape every page of this book. So much so, that even if I were able to footnote all their contributions, the book you hold in your hands would be double the size it is now. At the risk of sounding too much like Coleridge, I must admit that it has become impossible to know where my thoughts end and theirs begin.

First, I thank my mentors and advisors. Denise Gigante shared her deep love for Romanticism with me and modelled a standard of academic rigor that continues to guide my work; Franco Moretti pushed me to ask ambitions questions and imagine my work within the sweep of literary history; Alex Woloch is not only one of the greatest close-readers I know, but one of the most generous; Seth Lerer taught me how to write about material culture with zest; and Andrea Lunsford fostered my fascination with the writing process. Well before I ever thought of becoming an academic, I benefited from

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

Oxford Textual Perspectives is a series of informative and provocative studies focused upon texts (conceived of in the broadest sense of that term) and the technologies, cultures, and communities that produce, inform, and receive them. It provides fresh interpretations of fundamental works, images, and artifacts, and of the vital and challenging issues emerging in English literary studies. By engaging with the contexts and materiality of the text, its production, transmission, and reception history, and by frequently testing and exploring the boundaries of the notions of text and meaning themselves, the volumes in the series question conventional frameworks and provide innovative interpretations of both canonical and less well-known works. These books will offer new perspectives, and challenge familiar ones, both on and through texts and textual communities. While they focus on specific authors, periods, and issues, they nonetheless scan wider horizons, addressing themes and provoking questions that have a more general application to literary studies and cultural history as a whole. Each is designed to be as accessible to the non-specialist reader as it is fresh and rewarding for the specialist, combining an informative orientation in a landscape with detailed analysis of the territory and suggestions for further travel.

Elaine Treharne and *Greg Walker*

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Introduction: the Commonplace Method

In 1797, a Yorkshire woman named Jane Smithson began to write out quotations in a book of her own, creating a commonplace book. This tradition allowed Smithson to compose a manuscript with extracts that she inscribed alongside her own original verse. For her title page, she paints an easel with a sheet of paper pinned to it in the *trompe l'oeil* style. Here, she inscribes, "J Smithson | 1797," followed by a motto, "Awake sweet memory! And prove thy purest cells the relic of many a varied song!"[1] From this auspicious beginning, the collection unfolds as a meditation on memory and death, filled with poetry by Smithson's better-known contemporaries. For instance, she transcribes William Wordsworth's "We are Seven," which, she notes, comes "from a small collection, called *Lyrical Ballads*."[2] She pens a dedication that picks up the language of flowers as a metaphor for verse: "I dedicate its use to serve | To poetry—to eloquence! | To every flower which fancy flings . . ."[3] (see Figure 0.1). While Smithson imagined collected verses as a bouquet of flowers in the tradition of *florilegium*,[4]

[1] Jane Smithson, "Ricorda," 1797 (Princeton University, Mudd Library, Rare Books: Manuscripts Collection). The full manuscript can be viewed here: https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/9933230243506421

[2] Smithson, "Ricorda." [3] Smithson, "Ricorda."

[4] Ann Blair describes the "long-lived medieval genre, the florilegium" as a tool that "accumulated textual excerpts . . . sorted under topical headings." See "The Rise of Note-Taking in Early Modern Europe," *Intellectual History Review* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 309. See also Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), esp. ch. 8 and Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001), pp. 19–23.

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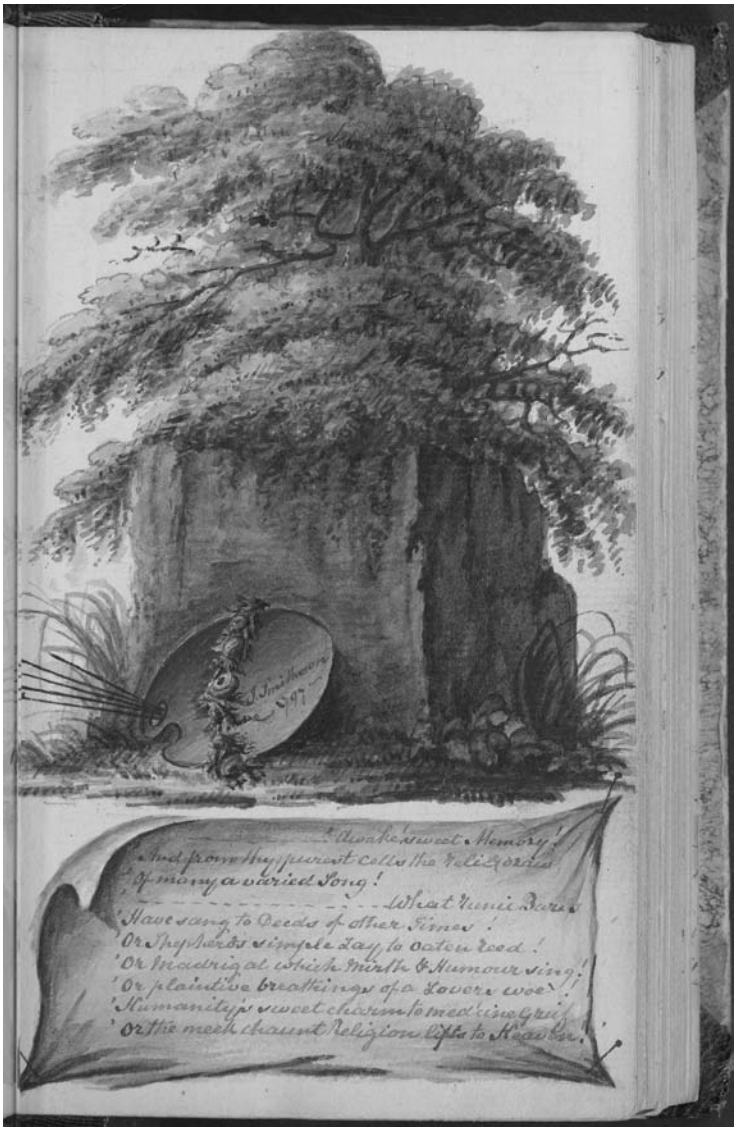
J. Smithson
1797
Awake sweet Memory!
And from thy purest cells the Reliquiæ
Of many a varied Song!
What Rustic Bard
Have sang to Deeds of other Times!
Or Shepherds simple Lay, to oaten Reed!
Or Madrigal which Mirth & Humour sing!
Or plaintive breathings of a Lovers woe!
Humanity's sweet charm to meet the Grief
Or the meek chaunt Religion lifts to Heaven.

FIGURE 0.1 Title page of Jane Smithson, "Ricorda." Commonplace Book, 1797–1825, C0199 no. 980, Courtesy of Princeton University Library.

there is, also, a material flower pressed into the front of the book, along with the note: "From her grave—funeral 1827."[5] Twenty years after Smithson had begun collecting poesy, she was buried among wildflowers. Someone picked one of these flowers and enclosed it as a final extract in Smithson's collection. While remarkable, Smithson's collection is not unique. It resembles countless other commonplace books kept throughout the nineteenth century—manuscript collections that were personally meaningful and culturally responsive.

Smithson, like the readers and writers I discuss in the following pages, lived in a society that structured literary experience through collecting, organizing, and sharing excerpts. Many did so in personal collections of quotations that they called commonplace books. Scholarship has established that the commonplace-book tradition survived into the Romantic period; however, we have yet to understand what became of this ancient strategy for organizing information in Romantic and Victorian Britain. *How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information* argues that the tradition continued to structure literary practice throughout the nineteenth century; moreover, commonplacing evolved to fit new epistemic virtues[6] and technological capabilities. In short, the technical and social conditions of nineteenth-century Britain facilitated engagement among commonplacing and associated traditions, especially the scrapbook and album. While authors' notebooks have received ample scholarly attention, they are not yet understood as part of the commonplace-book tradition. Even though the vast majority of nineteenth-century authors knew about commonplacing, they did not always use the name. Coleridge called his later collection "Fly-Catchers," Walter Scott used the traditional Latin title "*Adversaria*," while George Eliot referred to one of her commonplace books as a "Quarry," and Michael Faraday kept quotations in his "Philosophical Miscellany." Commonplacing, or the act of keeping a commonplace book, is endlessly adaptable, with a form that has adjusted to new conceptions of knowledge, shifting economic structures, and

[5] Smithson, "Ricorda."

[6] I use Daston and Galison's definition of epistemic virtues as "norms that are internalized and enforced by appeal to ethical values, as well as to pragmatic efficacy in securing knowledge . . . New Epistemic virtues come into being; old ones do not necessarily pass away." See Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), pp. 40–41.

developing technologies of print. Yet fundamentally, the commonplace method is a system of collecting quotations and other bits of information for personal use. Under the cover of the more general term, "notebook," countless writers—those who went on to become famous authors, and those, like Jane Smithson, who did not—employed the commonplace method. The following chapters contribute to our growing understanding of nineteenth-century information management and material culture by sharpening our appreciation of the commonplace method as a key organizational tool.

Most scholarship on the commonplace book tradition has focused on pre-nineteenth-century practices.[7] We are only beginning to explore the ways that commonplacing continued in Romantic and Victorian Britain. Historians (rather than literary scholars) have done the bulk of recent work on these later iterations of the tradition.[8] To date, the most extensive discussion of nineteenth-century commonplacing comes from the historian David Allan, who unearths Georgian practices of collecting quotations, especially in relation to questions of taste in polite society. Ultimately, however, Allan stops short of the Victorian period and suggests that the rise of the novel was associated with the

[7] See Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Lucia Dacome, "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (June 22, 2005): 603–25; Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); J. M. Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York: Pageant Press, 1974); Kevin M. Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Susan M. Stabile, *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Mark Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750–1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[8] See David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2004); Matthew D. Eddy, "Natural History, Natural Philosophy and Readers," in *Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 2: Enlightenment and Expansion 1707–1800*, ed. Stephen Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 297–309; Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001).

decline of commonplacing.[9] In his comprehensive *The Romantic Reading Nation*, William St Clair offers extensive statistics on reading practices, but the nature of his project renders his discussion of commonplacing especially broad, condensed into a handful of pages.[10] Historians have tended to talk about the commonplace tradition as evidence for reading practices, with particular attention to the economic and social forces that shape book production and reception. Thus, historical studies of commonplace books often focus on large scale analysis, rather than sustained attention to particular manuscripts. For literary scholars, the reverse is often true. Traditionally, literary scholars have been interested in individual authors' commonplace books as a view into writing and reading practices. As a result, Romantic and Victorian authors' commonplace books have been edited as scholarly resources, beginning with Kathleen Coburn's edition of Coleridge's notebooks in the 1950s.[11] Access to authors' notes made new fields of study like Genetic Criticism possible. Growing out of the French Structuralist movement, Genetic Criticism pioneered the examination of authors' papers as a way to reconstruct "the text before the text."[12] Of particular interest is Ruth Abbott's research on William Wordsworth's and George Eliot's writing practices[13] as well as Simon Reader's *Notework*.[14] A focus on working methods attends to texts-in-process, which supports theorizations of literary texts as unfixed.[15]

[9] Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*, see ch. 17.

[10] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, pp. 224–227.

[11] Kathleen Coburn, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957). The reader will find many other examples cited in the following pages.

[12] Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden, *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For recent examples of this method see Alexandra Socarides, *Dickinson Unbound: Paper, Process, Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) and Hannah Sullivan, *The Work of Revision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[13] Ruth Abbott. "Correcting the Page Order of Wordsworth's Notebook DC MS. 13." *Notes and Queries* 63, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 214–20 and Ruth Abbott, "George Eliot, Meter, and the Matter of Ideas: The Yale Poetry Notebook," *ELH* 82, no. 4 (December 7, 2015): 1179–1211.

[14] Reader, Simon. *Notework: Victorian Literature and Nonlinear Style. Notework*. (Stanford University Press, 2021).

[15] Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlotte, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009); Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

And, textual fluidity derives, in part, from the ever-changing media-ecologies within which texts are produced, circulated, and read.

Informed by Media Archeology, *How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information* excavates evidence of nineteenth-century commonplacing through research on over 300 manuscripts. Like media archeologists, I focus on "discursive structures" and media forms as they pertain to the evolution of commonplacing. The commonplace book has always been an intermedial object—rooted in oral, manuscript, and print cultures. Often, the tradition braids together all three. For instance, Chapter 4 will explore antiquarian collections like that of William Herd, who assembled Scottish ballads in his commonplace book while visiting the Highlands. Herd would go on to share this collection with his friend Sir Walter Scott, who would publish the verse in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. To engage intermedial and trans-historical literary events—like publishing ballads transcribed in a commonplace book—I attend to a discourse of excerpts, fragmentation, and material juxtaposition as fundamental mnemonic strategy. Moreover, a Media Archeological approach primes us to see continuity amidst rupture, to see the ways that the commonplace tradition continues today even as it has transformed to fit new media-ecologies and social concerns. Digital information is still structured by general topics with search engines' keywords, twitter hashtags, and social media sites that represent personal identity through curated fragments; scholarly work in the humanities still relies on the commonplace method as we arrange quotations or cut and paste images to support arguments; and the legacy of commonplacing recurs in twenty-first-century literature like David Shields's patchwork of uncited quotations in *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*.[16] In other words, the commonplace method of collecting and organizing excerpts reappears throughout history, reiterated in the context of different environments.

My aim is not, then, simply to recuperate the nineteenth-century commonplace tradition, but to analyze associated discourses and practices as evidence of technological, epistemological, and literary patterns. Indeed, the dramatic shifts in commonplace-book form throughout the nineteenth century suggest that larger social forces are at play. I follow

[16] David Shields, *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

Lisa Gitelman in thinking of new media less as "points of epistemic rupture" than as "socially embedded sites for the ongoing negotiation of meaning as such."[17] Considering technological development within a media-ecology offers a more expansive view of how media interact with one another. Recently, Tom Mole chose to think of Victorian receptions of Romanticism through the lens of "media ecology" because it "makes visible the interplay of media, and draws attention to the porous boundaries between them."[18] Such permeability recurs throughout the manuscripts I discuss in the following chapters. For now, consider Isabella Towers's collection of verse by Romantic authors (Hazlitt, Hunt, and Lamb inscribed the first three entries).[19] Because John Keats died before she began her collection, she could not get a sample of the poet's handwriting; instead, Towers includes *a photograph* of Joseph Severn's painting of Keats, head bent over a book.[20] By including a photograph of a painting of a poet reading a book, Towers has collapsed several layers of mediation. As the last section of this book ("Organizing People") argues, Romantics and Victorians consistently turned to new media for mnemonic tokens of absent people. From these fragments, they built a sense of presence.

Nineteenth-century commonplace books are especially distinctive because they represent a point at which the tradition reached more people than ever before. While scholars debate measures of literacy (does signing one's name mean a person could read?), there is no doubt that rates skyrocketed in the Victorian period so that by 1900 almost the entire population of England could be considered literate by minimal standards.[21] As more people kept collections of quotations and

[17] Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), p. 6.

[18] Tom Mole, *What the Victorians Made of Romanticism: Material Artifacts, Cultural Practices, and Reception History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 18.

[19] For more on these entries see Jillian M. Hess, "Reframing Poetry: The Romantic Essay and the Prospects of Verse," *European Romantic Review* 24, no. 3 (June 1, 2013): 343–351.

[20] Isabella Towers, "Album," Green Library, Stanford University, MS Codex M0450.

[21] See David Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); David Vincent, *The Rise of Mass Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Devon Lemire, "A Historiographical Survey of Literacy in Britain between 1780 and 1830," *Constellations* 4, no. 1 (2012). Of course, all of these works rely on Richard Altick's foundational text, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

information in books of their own, the tradition became less respected. While early modern commonplacing was reserved for classically educated men, nineteenth-century commonplacing was for "everyone," as James Mason would claim in *The Girl's Own Paper*.[22] Once the commonplace tradition dispersed among people of all economic classes, its form loosened to fit the flux of daily life.[23] For example, the first part of this book, "Organizing Ideas," explores how compilers dated entries in the form of a diary and began to organize extracts by author rather than general topics. Although many students learned to write according to the commonplace method, that did not mean they always kept commonplace books of their own. As Chapter 1, "Anatomy of the Commonplace," explores in more depth, nineteenth-century students were more likely to use anthologies than to select and copy out quotations by hand. In fact, Andrew Bell, one of the period's most influential educators, described commonplacing as a tool that had been necessary before "the invention of printing when books were scarce and dear;" however, now that students could access libraries filled with books, he felt the tradition no longer necessary "since the chief reasons for its continuance have ceased."[24] Advances in education were intertwined with political battles over parliamentary representations, which led to the Reform Act of 1862, a leap towards democracy. As more people could vote, schooling became a central issue, leading to the Education Act of 1872, which mandated that all children (aged 5 to 12) go to school.

Because public education rarely included Latin or Greek, the classical etymology of commonplaces receded behind negative (or, at best, neutral) associations. Ancient rhetoricians imagined these "places" as mental locations that store argumentative forms fit for a variety of cases. For example, Aristotle listed templates for arguments in his *Topica*. One of these *topoi* would provide a strong foundational form

[22] James Mason, "How to Keep a Commonplace Book," *Girl's Own Paper* 3 (1882): 602.

[23] Jonathan Rose's groundbreaking *The Intellectual History of the Working Classes* makes it clear that working people read. However, evidence of commonplacing is scant for two reasons. First, the cost of pen and paper was prohibitively expensive for those with factory wages. Second, working people's papers were less likely to make it into British archival holdings.

[24] Andrew Bell, *Mutual Tuition and Moral Discipline; or, Manual of Instructions for Conducting Schools [&c.]*., 7th edition (1823), p. 85.

for whatever case the orator might argue. Aristotle's *topoi* influenced Roman rhetoric primarily through Cicero, who theorized *Loci Communes* as components of legal argumentation. While Cicero continued to discuss *loci* as argumentative forms, he also added content to some of these "places" and suggested orators use quotations from great thinkers to build authority (*auctoritates*).[25] However, most Victorian readers were not familiar with Cicero's *loci communes*, never mind Aristotle's *koinos topos*. These classical terms are even more obscure today; thus, I should note that throughout this book I use the word "commonplace" according to older definitions related to collecting quotations. By the nineteenth century, the term was synonymous with the everyday, obvious, worn-out, or trite. The "commonplace method" of this chapter's title primarily refers to the humanist practice of collecting quotations, but it could also be interpreted as a widespread practice. Indeed, the title could be read ironically as a method that was dismissed as vapid. A person or an idea, for example, could be demeaned as "commonplace." Perhaps the poet Frederick Locker-Lampson put it best when he opened his printed commonplace book, *Patchwork*, by playing on the dual meanings of the term. "I do not know whether a reference to Dr. Johnson's Dictionary would show that a Commonplace-book is a book kept by a commonplace sort of person . . ."[26] By the nineteenth century *commonplace* (now usually spelled as a single word) had become almost entirely divorced from its etymological roots in classical rhetoric.

Nevertheless, Aristotle's concept of *topoi*—or topics—continues to influence literary studies. After World War II, the literary critic Ernst Curtius used *topoi* to analyze large swaths of texts and medieval histories.[27] While Curtius located the roots of his methodology in

[25] For more on the commonplace book's classical origins, see Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), ch. 1; David Allen, *Commonplace Books and Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ch. 3; Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001), pp. 13–16.

[26] Frederick Locker-Lampson, *Patchwork* (London: Smith, Elder, 1879), p. vii.

[27] For roughly contemporary mentions of *topoi*, see Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 201; and Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 103.

ancient rhetoric, he argued that new *topoi* developed beyond Aristotle's classifications to become literary tropes ("the youthful old woman"); conventions (affected modesty); or standardized phrases for concluding a text ("We must stop because night is coming on").[28] In the twenty-first century, *topos* studies emerged once again as a way to think about media. In particular, media archeologists used *topos* to talk about historical media as reiterative and recursive rather than linear. For example, Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka explain that Media Archeology "excavates media-cultural evidence,"[29] and commits to "thinking the old and new in parallel lines."[30] They do this by way of "*topos* studies"—a method explicitly borrowed from Curtius. Focusing on *topos* decentralizes human actors in favor of discursive structures, which, Parikka notes, are used "recursively in various historical contexts with novel articulations and significatory chains."[31] Building from Curtius's work, media archeologists find discursive patterns that recur throughout different times and cultures.[32] For example, Huhtamo writes about the moving panorama in nineteenth-century culture "as manifestations of an age-old topos about the painter's wondrous skills in imitating nature."[33] From this perspective, the commonplace method is both a system of collecting *topoi* and a *topos* itself: the ancient theme of finding tools to assist our all-too-fallible memory. Since antiquity, the commonplace method has enabled people to gather and store information; of course, the method has taken different forms and gone under different names, but the basic principle remains. As Richard Yeo notes, "We must confront this apparent need to rediscover past

[28] Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, originally published in German in 1948), pp. 82, 101–105, 83–85, 90. For information on how Curtius's theory of *topoi* differs from Aristotle's and Cicero's, see Colin Burrow, "Introduction" to Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. xii–xiii.

[29] Erkki Huhtamo, "Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archeology as Topos Study," in *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, ed. Jussi Parikka and Erkki Huhtamo (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), p. 28.

[30] Jussi Parikka, *What Is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 2.

[31] Jussi Parikka, *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 140.

[32] Huhtamo, "Dismantling the Fairy Engine," p. 16.

[33] Erkki Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), p. 16.

lessons about tools and techniques for gathering and storing information."[34] Media Archeology's method of "tracing the *topoi*" enables a study of commonplace books not as isolated objects, but as participants in an age-old discourse of information management.

Recognizing that media are never fixed objects helps illuminate commonplace books' fluidity. In this respect, it is instructive to consider the commonplace book's interaction with adjacent (and often overlapping) traditions of the scrapbook and album. Scholars of the scrapbook and album track these traditions back to the commonplace book. However, relationships among the commonplace book, scrapbook, and album are neither transparent nor direct. In the nineteenth century, the three traditions were so intertwined that it is common to find elements of all three in a single manuscript. As a result, my own work has been facilitated by scholarship on scrapbooks and albums. Scholarly interest in the former has amplified in the wake of contemporary concerns about information overload.[35] In *Writing with Scissors* Ellen Gruber Garvey masterfully entwines media and literary studies and analyzes scrapbooks in nineteenth-century America as interactive tools that craft "alternative histories."[36] Like Garvey's work on the scrapbook, scholars turn to the "Ladies Album" as a way to offer a more inclusive history. For example, Samantha Matthews and Patrizia Di Bello emphasize the gendered nature of albums in this period.[37]

[34] Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. xv.

[35] Important works on the scrapbook tradition include Jessica Helfand, *Scrapbooks: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); James A. Secord, "Scrapbook Science: Composite Caricatures in Late Georgian England," in *Figuring It Out: Science, Gender, and Visual Culture*, ed. Ann B. Shteir and Bernard V. Lightman (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2006), pp. 164–191; Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia Buckler, *The Scrapbook in American Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Clare Pettitt, "Topos, Taxonomy and Travel in Nineteenth-Century Women's Scrapbooks," in *Travel Writing, Visual Culture and Form, 1760–1900*, ed. Mary Henes and Brian H. Murray, Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016); and Sharon Marcus, "Re: Sources," *Theatre Survey* 54, no. 2 (May 2013): 283.

[36] Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); especially chs 4 and 5.

[37] For more on nineteenth-century album culture see Katherine D. Harris, "Borrowing, Altering, and Perfecting the Literary Annual Form—or What It Is Not: Emblems, Almanacs, Pocket-Books, Albums, Scrapbooks, and Gift Books," *The Journal of the Initiative for Digital Humanities, Media, and Culture* 1, no. 1 (December 14, 2010);

Much like the commonplace book, albums developed from a humanist tradition, the *album amicorum*, and became devalued once women participated in the practice.[38]

Such idiosyncratic, hybrid collections have posed methodological problems for literary historians. In 2007, Meredith McGill noted how commonplace books "are difficult if not impossible objects for literary analysis."[39] Literary scholars are trained to place texts within a historical context, but commonplace books get their "creative charge from decontextualization."[40] McGill, writing about Emerson's and Thoreau's commonplace books, argues that the "generic miscellaneousness" of the collection troubles methodologies that require locating texts within a particular time and place. Since McGill wrote this article, the field of literary history has changed, as she herself noted in 2016: McGill suggests that as literary scholars incorporate media studies, new modes of analysis become available.[41] Though she did not necessarily have commonplace books in mind, McGill's later work suggests an approach for literary scholars to engage with commonplacing. A focus on media's discursive elements addresses McGill's originally stated problem of how commonplacing decontextualizes literature. Rather than focusing entirely on literary extracts, comparative media studies teaches us to reorient our focus on the medium—that is, the

June Schlueter, *The Album Amicorum & the London of Shakespeare's Time* (London: British Library, 2011); Samantha Matthews, "Albums, Belonging, and Embodying the Feminine," in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, ed. K. Boehm (New York: Springer, 2016), pp. 107–129. See also Samantha Matthews, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[38] For more on the *album amicorum* see M. A. E. Nickson, *Early Autograph Albums in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1970) and Schlueter, *The Album Amicorum*.

[39] Meredith L. McGill, "Common Places: Poetry, Illocality, and Temporal Dislocation in Thoreau's A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (July 1, 2007): 357–374. See also Cary Nelson, "The Temporality of Commonplaces: A Response to Meredith McGill," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (2007): 375–380.

[40] McGill, "Common Places," p. 375. Commenting on McGill, Diedre Lynch writes that Romantic books "came unbound even as they came together." Deidre Lynch, "Paper Slips: Album, Archiving, Accident," *Studies in Romanticism* 57, no. 1 (2018): 108.

[41] See Meredith L. McGill, "Literary History, Book History, and Media Studies," in *Turns of Event: Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies in Motion*, ed. Hester Blum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 23–39.

commonplace book as a tool for organizing multi-modal information. What if, instead of trying to locate one of Emerson's transcribed quotations within literary history, we locate it within the commonplace tradition? This raises a host of different questions. We might pay more attention to the layout of a particular page—how entries work congruously, synthetically, or contradictorily. We might also pay attention to medial shifts from handwritten text to cut-and-pasted newsprint.

Clearly, manuscript commonplace books are endlessly variable; accordingly, I make no claims to an exhaustive study of commonplacing in nineteenth-century Britain. Instead, I have isolated larger patterns—or, in the language of commonplacing, *topoi*—in Romantic and Victorian collections that recur throughout the century. In the following pages, I ask: how does one make room for the poet's imagination in a collection of quotations? How does one collect material evidence for historical arguments? And how does one commemorate the dead through fragments? Doubtless, there are many more trends in nineteenth-century commonplacing yet to be analyzed. My hope is that in writing this book I have offered a framework that will make commonplace books more approachable objects for literary analysis.

As should be clear by now, there are two interlocking "commonplace methods" at the heart of this book. Most obviously, I examine the historical commonplace method of collecting information in personal notebooks. Secondly, my own method of analysis is indebted to the historical commonplace tradition I discuss. Like other literary historians, I have accumulated evidence in the form of quotations, historical documents, and photographic images that I use to support a narrative about commonplacing in nineteenth-century Britain. When I refer to respected scholars, I am partaking in a tradition inherited from early modern humanism and the ancient rhetorical appeal to authority. And, when I offer photographic reproductions as evidence to support my arguments, I continue the legacy of historical empiricism that I discuss in Chapter 4. Within the humanities, the commonplace tradition has been—and continues to be—an integral method for collecting and presenting authentic evidence.[42] The following chapters gather

[42] For more on the historical formation of evidence see James K. Chandler, Arnold Ira Davidson, and Harry D. Harootunian, *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion Across the Disciplines* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

evidence that testifies to the tradition's endurance through the nineteenth century and into twenty-first-century scholarly practice.

The Contents of this Book

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information interrogates the relationship between knowledge formation and technologies for organizing information. Divided into two parts, the first half of the book contends that methods for organizing material developed in line with the period's dominant epistemic frameworks, while the second half argues that commonplace books helped Romantics and Victorians organize people. Accordingly, this is a book about the commonplace tradition primarily, and the historical figures who made use of it secondarily. To that end, chapters focus on prominent organizational methods in nineteenth-century commonplacing, often attached to an associated epistemic virtue: diaristic forms and the imagination (Chapter 2); "real time" entries signaling objectivity (Chapter 3); antiquarian remnants, serving as empirical evidence for historical arguments (Chapter 4); communally produced commonplace books that attest to socially constructed knowledge (Chapter 5); and blank spaces in commonplace books of mourning (Chapter 6).

Part I, "Organizing Ideas," argues that different modes of thinking prompted different methods for arranging a commonplace book. Chapters 2–4 examine three central epistemological virtues: imagination, objectivity, and empiricism. The first of these chapters, "Commonplace Books of the Imagination," claims that Coleridge's collection of notebooks should be reassessed as a new stage in the evolution of the commonplace book tradition and, moreover, that his theorization of commonplaces (particularly in *Aids to Reflection*) exemplifies how the Romantic imagination negotiated commonplace-book form to fit an organic episteme. Chapter 3, "Laboratory Commonplace Books," begins with Coleridge's friend Humphry Davy and the notes he took while inhaling nitrous oxide. I show that while Davy was comfortable with subjectivity as a part of laboratory experimentation, his successor, Michael Faraday, felt it had no place in scientific thought. Instead, Faraday argued for "real-time" entries in laboratory notebooks as a mark of objectivity. Faraday's training as a bookbinder's assistant set

him up to innovate new forms for organizing information including his cut-and-paste index. From the laboratory to the field, Chapter 4, "Commonplace Books of History," contends that antiquarianism, along with the burgeoning fields of archeology and geology, depended upon the commonplace method to collect empirical data. This chapter addresses Walter Scott's thousands of papers, which he used to supply lengthy notes for the *Magnum Opus*. While Scott constantly interrupts his texts with relics from the past, George Eliot constructs a different kind of historical novel—one in which plot subsumes historical fact. Eliot kept commonplace books by hand, thus lending a uniformity to miscellaneous content. Both Scott and Eliot reproduced their historical research as prose, but by the end of the century, historians could offer visual proof in the form of facsimiles and photographs. This chapter concludes with Victorian antiquarian-archeologists and the way one eccentric Shakespearean scholar collected images in hundreds of scrapbooks meant as evidence for historical arguments.

Part II, "Organizing People," argues that Romantics and Victorians commonplaced people as well as ideas. Exploring social aspects of the tradition, particularly as it intersected with the friendship album, I detail the social functions commonplace books performed: solidifying friendships, negotiating romantic entanglements, and coping with death. Chapter 5, "Social Commonplace Books," builds from the work romantic scholars have done to illuminate the social aspects of the Keats–Hunt circle (the so-called "Cockney School") and analyzes their commonplace books as sites of community formation. Positioned at the intersection of album and commonplace book culture, the Cockney School collected samples of each other's handwriting along with locks of hair to document friendships. Additionally, this chapter offers the first serious analysis of the 18 commonplace books kept by Thomazine, Sarah, Mary, and Maria Leigh—dubbed "the Sisterhood of Slade"—and their companions John Hamilton Reynolds, James Rice, and Benjamin Bailey. These friends wrote poetry together and for one another as a way of performing and documenting their friendship. Because compilers invested commonplace books with the ability to serve as proxy for a person's body, they also functioned morbidly. The final chapter, "Commonplace Books of Mourning," argues that mourners turned to the tradition to build a sense of presence. This chapter provides a sustained analysis of Tennyson's Butcher's Books—long, thin accounting books

habitually used by butchers—which, I submit, are both commonplace book and literary draft because, as a poet, Tennyson chose to organize commonplaces in stanzas that ultimately became *In Memoriam*. Tennyson's Butcher's Books absorb commonplace-book culture formally and also thematically, as Tennyson circulated commonplaces in his elegy and modeled a strategy of reading extractions as metonymic representations of the dead. Inspired by Tennyson's writing, many Victorians chose to include extractions from *In Memoriam* in their commonplace books. Most famously, after Prince Albert died, Queen Victoria transcribed and annotated extracts from *In Memoriam* in her own *Album Consolativum*.

By way of coda, this book concludes with the legacy of information management in twenty-first-century digital culture. In Francis Bacon's view, the heads of a commonplace book are not simply inert organizational strategies—they also *think*. He argued for organizing extracts under general topics because these heads "have in them a kind of observation, without that which neither long life breeds experience, nor great reading knowledge."[43] In other words, the general heads corral information and transform it into usable knowledge. Bacon's assertion is less startling in the wake of media theorists like N. Katherine Hayles who posit technological cognition, or the "cognitive nonconscious." Hayles defines cognition as "a process that interprets information within contexts that connect it with meaning."[44] To illustrate this point, Hayles draws our attention to "cognitive assemblages"—the Internet being the prime example—of the intersection of human and technical cognitions. Search engines are another example of how human and technical cognition work to extend one another's capabilities: the more information a search engine accumulates, the better its capacity to parse users' needs. Search terms, as a digital parallel to Bacon's "heads," can also be said to "have in them a kind of observation." For example, consider how Ann Blair uses "a Google search for 'information overload'" which "generates more than 1.5 million hits" as evidence of the twenty-first century's struggle with

[43] Francis Bacon, "Advice to Fulke Greville on his Studies," in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 103.

[44] N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), p. 22.

too much to know.[45] Google knows something about our knowing. In this case, Google knows the products consumers who enter this particular search term might want to buy. Accordingly, the search engine presents Blair with a slew of commercial venues—"office supply stores, management consultants, and stress relief services . . ."[46]—all of which indicate how, today, general topics are monetized. In a world of PPC (pay-per-click) and SEO (search engine optimization), the twenty-first-century topic has come a long way from Aristotle's *topoi* and Cicero's *loci*, yet the core properties of the commonplace method—gathering and storing multiform information—remain with us today.

[45] Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 3.
[46] Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 3.

1

Anatomy of the Commonplace

> [L]et us take down one of those old notebooks which we have all, at one time or another, had a passion for beginning . . . Here we have written down the names of great writers in their order of merit; here we have copied out fine passages from the classics.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *Hours in a Library* (1925)

This chapter delves deeper into the contents of nineteenth-century commonplace books by examining their formal features. Although I am most concerned with manuscript evidence in the following chapters, here I pause to consider printed texts that reveal how Romantics and Victorians thought about commonplacing. Accordingly, in this chapter I attend to printed instructions for keeping a commonplace book in three contexts. First, I examine the legacy of John Locke's index, often printed along with instructions in Romantic pre-formatted commonplace books. One of the arguments of this book is that it is a mistake to see nineteenth-century commonplace books and scrapbooks as distinct traditions; thus, in the second section, I offer evidence for how the scrapbook developed from within the commonplace-book tradition as editors adapted printed templates originally associated with commonplacing. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining individuals who published their methods for organizing notes either in periodical articles or as printed commonplace books.

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums.
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Locke's Legacy

Of all the systems for organizing one's notes in Georgian England, John Locke's was the most influential. Locke had published his method for keeping a commonplace book in 1685 at the request of a French acquaintance, Mr Toignard. This is why Locke penned his description in French under the title *Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils*. After his death, an English translation—*A New Method of a Common-Place-Book*—appeared. Because collections of Locke's posthumous works often included his "New Method," his commonplacing practice became entwined with his legacy of empiricism.[1] His index, in particular, would dominate commonplace book culture through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a shorthand for an orderly mind. Lucia Dacome explains that "Lockean compiling flourished in an environment in which the order of one's mind was valued as a sign of social as well as personal accomplishment and moral integrity."[2] And Locke's index was exceptionally orderly: he subdivided each letter of the alphabet into five more boxes for each of the vowels, creating an index with 120 boxes. Beginning each section with a Latin general topic (for example, *Adversariorium*[3] *Methodus*), Locke describes his method in the form of a commonplace book. Locke suggests that headings ought to be written in Latin, preferably in the nominative case, though he observes that the particular language matters less than the reader's consistency. Above all, Locke argued that readers should choose their own general topics, thereby facilitating critical engagement.

> ADVERSORIUM METHODUS.] I take a paper book of what size I please. I divide the two first pages that face one another by parallel lines into five and twenty equal parts, every fifth line black, the other red. I then cut them perpendicularly by other lines that I draw from the top to the bottom of the page, as you may see in the table prefixed.

[1] John Locke, *The Works of John Locke . . . : With Alphabetical Tables . . .* (London: A. Churchill, and A. Manship, 1722).

[2] Lucia Dacome, "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (June 22, 2005): 624.

[3] Locke referred to his collections with the classical title "Adversaria." For a thorough explanation of Locke's commonplace practice see G. G. Meynell, "John Locke's Method of Commonplacing as Seen in his Drafts and his Medical Notebooks, Bodleian MSS Locke D. 9, F. 21 and F. 23," *The Seventeenth Century* 8, no. 2 (1993): 245.

> I put about the middle of each five spaces one of the twenty letters I design to make use of,[4] and a little forward in each space, the five vowels, one below another, in the natural order. This is the index to the whole volume, how big soever it may be.[5]

Turning to his sample index, we can see how Locke listed this entry in the box "Ae" for the first letter and vowel of *Adversariorum*. To illustrate Locke's method, I have included an example of this index from one of Michael Faraday's commonplace books because the great autodidact was one of the few readers to fill out the entire index (we will learn more about his commonplace book collection in Chapter 3). Faraday was, no doubt, remarkable; most readers that attempted a Lockean index abandoned the strategy after several entries. Indeed, Locke's method was appealing in theory, but not in practice (see Figure 1.1).

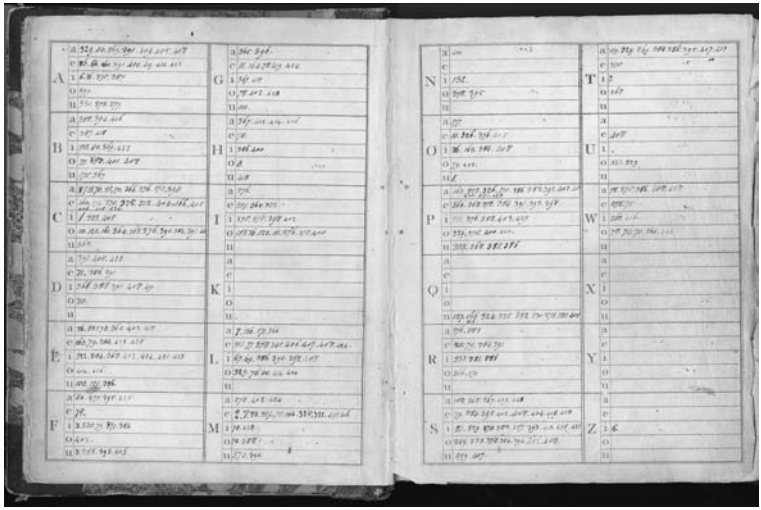


FIGURE 1.1 Michael Faraday, Lockean Index in his Commonplace Book, SC MSS 002/1/4, The Institution of Engineering and Technology.

[4] Locke explains that he omits several letters from this index because he finds he never uses them.

[5] John Locke, *The Works of John Locke* (London: A. Bettesworth, 1727), p. 485.

Although Locke depended upon the commonplace tradition, he also mistrusted it because he believed that readers should not accept information simply because it comes from authorities. Instead, he argued, readers should evaluate texts with their faculty of reason. This is a significant departure from older traditions of the commonplace book, which were explicitly designed to collect wise sayings from respected thinkers as sources of *auctoritas*. Furthermore, Locke maintained that a well-stocked commonplace book was not the same thing as knowledge. He criticized men who filled their minds with a "great stock of borrowed and collected arguments,"[6] and risked contradicting themselves. Instead, Locke suggests that students ought to supplement their reading with "meditation and discourse" because, as he explained, good readers know what to keep and what to discard. Readers must find the method that suits their particular needs. Even Locke had developed his method over decades of experimentation as he compiled upwards of forty commonplace books.[7] Nevertheless, by the nineteenth century, Locke's method had ossified into one single index that publishers used to market blank commonplace books.

Publishers used Locke's name to sell commonplace books, but they also recognized that most readers would not use the philosopher's index. As a result, almost all Georgian editions offer modifications to make commonplacing accessible to a broader population of readers. For example, *Bell's Common-place Book for the Pocket; Form'd Generally upon the Principles Recommended and Practiced by Mr. Locke* (1770) suggests that the reader use the vernacular. "Mr. Locke recommends the use of the Latin for the Index; which, though it may possibly answer the purpose of the learned, is by no means adapted to general use."[8] *Bell's* title page clearly positions Locke as a selling point and the introduction explains Locke's index, while also demonstrating how

[6] Peter King and John Locke, *The Life of John Locke: With Extracts from his Correspondence, Journals, and Common-Place Books* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830), p. 105.

[7] For more on Locke's commonplace books see Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), especially ch. 7. See also Michael Stolberg, "John Locke's 'New Method of Making Common-Place-Books': Tradition, Innovation and Epistemic Effects," *Early Science and Medicine* 19, no. 5 (2014): 448–470.

[8] John Bell, *Bell's Common-Place Book, Form'd Generally upon the Principles Recommended and Practised by Mr. Locke* (London: Printed for John Bell, 1770), p. v.

various consumers might use the book. He follows the introduction with "examples of its use to the STUDENT, or man of reading, in his perusal of books at home; and to the TRAVELLER, or man of observation in his travels abroad . . ."[9] These two examples convey the types of entries Bell suggests to his readers. The student, "or man of reading," makes extracts from Locke's works, and while he provides full citations, he indexes the entries by general topics such as Toleration (To), rather than the author's name. By contrast, the traveler records observations of places visited, such as the public library in *Augsburg*—indexed under Augsburg (Au) and library (Li). With his suggested templates, Bell attempts to attract more consumers, but he is also, as Barbara Benedict points out, "shap[ing] his readers' subjectivity to fit print" by "defining its [the audience's] desires."[10] Blank pages follow Locke's index, signaling the owner's control over the rest of the book. Following Bell, publishers continued to market books with Locke's name, even as they quickly dismissed his method in their prefaces. As John Walker's *A New Commonplace Book; Being an Improvement on That Recommended by Mr. Locke; Properly Ruled throughout with a Complete Skeleton Index, and Ample Directions for Its Use . . .* (1799) declared, "The inconveniences of Mr. Locke's method are palpable."[11] And yet, Locke's name features prominently on Walker's title page.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the commonplace tradition was in want of a new name. Accordingly, the publishers John Taylor and James Hessey decided to market their pre-formatted edition as *The Literary Diary; or, Improved Common-Place Book* by including Locke's index with the suggestion, announced in the title, that the reader might choose not to use it at all and instead record entries chronologically, as though writing in a diary. More to the point, the title uses familiar language to define the commonplace tradition as a daily record of

[9] John Bell, *Bell's Common-Place Book*, p. viii.

[10] Barbara M. Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 47.

[11] John Walker, *A New Commonplace Book; Being an Improvement on That Recommended by Mr. Locke; Properly Ruled throughout with a Complete Skeleton Index, and Ample Directions for Its Use; Equally Adapted to There Man of Letters and the Man of Observation, the Traveller & the Student, and Forming an Useful & Agreeable Companion, on the Road; and in the Closet,* (London: Printed for J. Walker, 1799), p. 1. Walker also recommended the commonplace method in his earlier pedagogical text, *A Rhetorical Grammar* (1785).

reading. In addition to instructions for Locke's index, they include an abridged translation of the Jesuit priest Drexelius' seventeenth-century *Aurifodina*, which argues for the importance of keeping a commonplace book as an aid to support memory: "learned men endued with great memory . . . assisted themselves by making collections—*ergo notandum et excerpendum*."[12] In his introduction, Taylor joined with others in defining commonplace books as "promptuaries or storehouses; wherein to deposit our own ideas, as well as the most valuable thoughts of others."[13] Taylor describes commonplacing as a negotiation between borrowed and original thought and explains that readers might record extracts along with private reflections to create a literary diary. Reams of blank paper follow Taylor's introduction, ready for whatever the owner might deem worthy of remembrance—with, or without, organization. This strategy worked, and *The Literary Diary* successfully ran from 1794 to 1814.

Shortly thereafter, in 1837, the American Reverend John Todd introduced a new revision of Locke's method: *Index Rerum: or Index of Subjects, Intended as a Manual to Aid the Student and the Professional Man, in Preparing Himself for Usefulness, with an Introduction, Illustrating the Utility and Method of Use*. Todd's method reflects new technological conditions that rendered print ubiquitous and cheap. In short, he reimagined the commonplace book as a repository of references, rather than quotations. Though his method revises Locke's, Todd chose not to use the term commonplace book in his title, settling on a different Latin term (*Index Rerum*), followed by an explanation in English. *Index Rerum* not only explains Todd's method, but also provides a printed template for the student to begin collecting subjects. Todd's method proved popular—it was widely used in the United States and highly publicized in Britain. Like many before him, Todd found Locke's method needlessly laborious: its fame, Todd argues, is "not owing to any intrinsic merit . . . but to its bearing his own great

[12] John Taylor and James Hessey, *The Literary Diary; or, Improved Common Place Book* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1811), p. 6. Richard Woodhouse kept one of these books to store Keats's poems. It is available for viewing on Houghton Library's website: <https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:13850206$1i>.

[13] Taylor and Hessey, *The Literary Diary*, p. 1.

name, and professing to be the result of his experience."[14] As an alternative, Todd recommends turning the entire commonplace book into an index, with several pages devoted to each letter of the alphabet (subdivided by vowel, as Locke suggested). Rather than entering complete quotations, the student would note topics and associated pages in the books they were reading. As an example, Todd provides his entry on America, which he indexes under "Ae" with the following short remarks: "supposed to be known in the time of Homer; Thomas' Hist. Print. V.1, p. 20."[15] Crucially, Todd's method assumes the reader would have easy access to the books referenced—an assumption that could be taken for granted in the mid-nineteenth century, when more readers could afford personal libraries or lending library subscriptions.[16] Moreover, advocates of Todd's method suggested that its quickness would accommodate busy readers. As *The Sporting Gazette* wrote in 1862, Todd's *Index Rerum* was simpler and easier to use than Locke's method: "Many can spare the time to write out a reference whom time would not allow to copy out a passage: to such this will be found especially of service."[17] This method was so useful, it is worth noting, that Melvil Dewey introduced his catalogue system as an alternative to commonplacing. He writes that "the plan has proved of great service . . . in taking the place of the common note-book and Index Rerum."[18] Todd's index remained popular through the nineteenth century, and, in 1882, James Mason recommended it in his article, "How to Keep a Commonplace Book," and provides a sample page to clarify the method (see Figure 1.2).[19]

[14] John Todd, *Index Rerum; Or, Index of Subjects: Intended as a Manual to Aid the Student and the Professional Man in Preparing Himself for Usefulness, with an Introduction Illustrating its Utility and Method of Use* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & co., 1856), p. 3.

[15] Todd, *Index Rerum*, p. 12.

[16] For two classic explorations of working-class reading practices see Richard Daniel Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

[17] *The Sporting Gazette* (London, England), Saturday, December 6, 1862; p. 96; Issue 6.

[18] Melvil Dewey, *Decimal Classification and Relative Index* . . . (Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1876), p. 9.

[19] James Mason, "How to Keep a Commonplace Book," *Girl's Own Paper* 3 (1882): 602–603.

HOW TO KEEP A COMMONPLACE BOOK. 601

DIANA.

BY PAUL BLAKE.

BESIDE the busy little brook
Which skirts that clump of cedars
Sits fair Diana with her book,
Most picturesque of readers.

By idle tales she sets no store,
Her passion is for knowledge;
She's reading up a treatise for
The tutor of her college.

She knows the structure of the eyes,
Can state the Great Bear's distance,
Can tell you where Coimbo lies,
Or gauge the wind's resistance.

She knows how fast the planets spin,
Can trace a comet's orbit;
She likes to plunge the litmus in
The acids which absorb it.

She drives half mad her brother Jack,
Who's fresh from Alma Mater,
With questions on the Zodiac,
Or Sanscrit forms of pater.

She's sorry ladies can't as yet
Join Christchurch, Caius, or Merton,
But means to ask papa to let
Her go next year to Girton.

HOW TO KEEP A COMMONPLACE BOOK.

COMMONPLACE books for bookworms!" "Not a commonplace books, rather, Susan, for you and for everybody." Well said, Nanette, you always back me up. But let us have a talk about commonplace books, and Susan and all who think with her will most likely change their minds. The great object of reading is, or at any rate ought to be, self-improvement. We should use books as a means of culture, and it is therefore an important question how to get the largest possible amount of good out of them.

Nothing more easy, you say. Just read away, and remember everything you read. With all respect for you, Susan, I don't think much of that observation. *Could* you remember everything, and *would* you if you could? Memories are not like that famous tent we have all heard about, which, when it was taken out of the nutshell, was no more than the right size to hold the prince, but grew and grew till at last it sheltered all his army, though that army was as numerous as the sand on the seashore. No; we must have an aid to memory, and the best aid, say I, is a well-kept commonplace book.

Remembering everything, too, would be a misfortune, for a great deal of what we read we may as well forget. It may be quite useless to us, or may fail to harmonise with our individuality; and when that is the case, to be eager to keep it in mind is about as absurd as if we were to follow the example of the ostrich, and take to stuffing ourselves with stones and tenpenny nails. Here, again, the commonplace book steps in. We put in it exactly what suits us—just those things we wish to remember and want to refer to again.

But a commonplace book should contain more than mere references to books. We should store up in it references to personal history and observation. There will also be thoughts that strike us, thoughts that seem to have come flying through the air to find a home in our minds. Put these down. They will, first of all, most likely be inserted in your journal, if you keep a journal, and entries should be transferred from time to time from your journal to your commonplace book.

"Divide your learning," remarks someone, "between your memory and your note-books." A commonplace book is an index to our intellectual life, and you know what the poet says—

"Index learning turns no student pale,
But holds the eel of science by the tail."

Neglecting a commonplace book, you give the go-by to an essential part of the art of reading and thinking.

To some, of course, a commonplace book will prove of greater utility than to others, and especially it will be of use to those happiest of people who have to work for their living. By its means we accumulate a store of information bearing on our occupations, and so gain more and more the mastery over what we have to do. Let governesses, teachers of music, art students, book-keepers, clerks, and girls in shops and warehouses only keep such a book with regularity for, let us say, a year, with special reference, if they like, to their own pursuits, and then say whether they have not now had pointed out to them one of the secrets of worldly success.

Every Sunday-school teacher also ought to keep a commonplace book. It was remarked some months back by a writer in this magazine of ours that "in nine cases out of ten those who fail in teaching are those who fail in preparing." Now, a great portion of the work of preparing consists in the accumulation of material, and everyone will acknowledge that that accumulation should be set about in the most orderly manner possible.

The question now arises, how is our commonplace book to be kept? It must have one leading feature—easy reference—and that is not so easy to obtain. A book without arrangement is a mass of learned lumber, interesting and amusing it may be to look over, but of no service when we really want anything.

There is not much chance of our getting a plan without some disadvantages, but amongst the many which have been advocated from time to time, the best, I think, is that recommended by the Rev. Dr. John Todd, the author of "The Student's Manual." Whether he invented it or not I do not know—most likely not. This commonplace book on Todd's principle I shall now describe. It is neither difficult to start nor to understand.

Buy first of all a book of blank paper, ruled, if you like, with faint blue lines. The number of pages should be either a few over 260, or a few over 520. The size of the page will depend much on taste, and a good deal also on the size of your handwriting. For this sort of work the smaller and neater that is the better.

Rule every page with a line a short distance from the top, and another line parallel to the left-hand margin, and just far enough away from it to admit of writing an ordinary-sized word between the margin and the line.

Then divide the pages amongst the letters of the alphabet. Suppose your book has two hundred and sixty pages, that will admit of giving ten pages to each letter.

Take the ten pages devoted to A and divide these amongst the five vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, two pages to each, the reason for which you will see presently. Place now at the top of pages 1 and 2 "A—*a*," on pages 3 and 4 "A—*e*," on pages 5 and 6 "A—*i*," on pages 7 and 8 "A—*o*," and on pages 9 and 10 "A—*u*." Three examples are given below, and these will show you better than any amount of writing exactly what is to be done.

Treat the next ten pages, those devoted to B, in precisely the same way: "B—*a*," "B—*e*," "B—*i*," "B—*o*," "B—*u*." Then deal with C, then with D, and so on to the end of the alphabet.

Your commonplace book is now ready for use. The rule under which all entries are made in it is this: Fix on a word under which the entry is to appear; take the first letter and the first vowel following the first letter, and place the entry on the page at the top of which that letter and vowel stand. The catchword is to go in the space ruled off to the left of the page.

A a	A e	A i

Thus, supposing we had to enter "Music, a new theory of," &c., we would place it on the page headed by "M—*u*," entering the word music in the space ruled off, right under the capital M.

FIGURE 1.2 James Mason, "How to Keep a Commonplace Book," *Girl's Own Paper*, 1882 with sample of Todd's *Index Rerum*, in lower right corner.

Books of Scraps

Cut-and-pasted scraps always existed within commonplacing, but the veritable explosion of cheap print made scrapbooking mainstream. Unlike twenty-first-century scrapbooks,[20] those assembled in the nineteenth century contained more ubiquitous cuttings, typically from the reams of newsprint that had become newly accessible given technological advances. Cheap print deluged the public with the advent of the steam press in 1812, followed by the rotary press in 1843, and hot metal typesetting in 1884. This explosion of print materializes in commonplace books as news-cuttings begin to crowd out handwritten excerpts. Moreover, lithography and photography transformed the look of commonplace books—just as it had done for print. Readers now expected illustrations to accompany printed text. Deidre Lynch makes the important point that many scrapbook compilers were "self-conscious about their interventions into the codex."[21] Crafting a bound book of one's own was done in the context of a culture of print that set a horizon of expectations for what a codex could look like. If lithography allowed printed books to include more pictures and illustrative elements, why should commonplace books look any different? Of course, as Ann Blair has shown, scrapbooking was by no means a nineteenth-century invention. And yet, in the early modern period, it took a good deal of money to collect scraps—especially considering that many of these scraps came from rare medieval manuscripts.[22] While Chapter 4 will linger on several nineteenth-century antiquarian collections, most nineteenth-century scraps came from widely accessible prints like those found in Rudolf Ackermann's publications.

When Ackermann introduced lithography to England in 1796, he used it to produce hand-colored illustrations for his *Repository of Arts*. His readers cut images of fashionable dress and illustrious people,

[20] See Jessica Helfand, *Scrapbooks: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[21] Deidre Lynch, "Paper Slips: Album, Archiving, Accident," *Studies in Romanticism* 57, no. 1 (2018): 99.

[22] See Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) and Ann Blair, "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 4 (1992): 541–551.

which they pasted alongside handwritten notes. Additionally, Ackerman's *Repository* included a series titled "The Domestic Commonplace-Book; containing authentic Receipts and miscellaneous Information in every branch of domestic economy, and of general utility."[23] These included the "prevention of mildew in peach-trees" and a recipe for making "a kind of Roman cement."[24] Thus, Ackerman's *Repository* modeled a template for commonplacing along with images suitable for cutting. Consider a page from a nineteenth-century scrapbook compiled atop an earlier commonplace book (see Figure 1.3). The rest of the manuscript contains miscellaneous matter: handwritten recipes, curiosities like fabric purportedly in the pattern of Mary, Queen of Scots's bed, and hand-painted illustrations by Isaac Cruikshank. Beneath the cuttings, general topics from an earlier commonplace book are visible. Quite literally, this scrapbook was built atop the commonplace book tradition.

Ackerman's lithography, though the latest print technology in 1799, was quickly usurped by newer inventions. By 1837, readers enjoyed mechanically colored images produced by chromolithography and, in the 1870s, photographic reproductions set alongside print. Once photography joined older print techniques through photolithography and photozincography, the public could expect facsimiles as documentary evidence, along with other illustrations and decorative elements.[25] As Gerard Curtis explains, "nineteenth-century literary culture . . . drew on a partnership between the textual and the visual."[26] Notions of how a text could look expanded to include more visual material; the preponderance of newspaper cuttings fit technological developments that produced texts intertwined with images. In consequence, readers could not simply transcribe words without losing elements of design. Photographs would also become essential accompaniments to print.

[23] Rudolph Ackermann, ed., "The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions, Manufactures, &c," in *The Repository of Arts, Literature, Fashions, Manufactures, &c* (London: L. Harrison, 1817), p. 64.

[24] Ackermann, "The Repository of Arts," p. 64.

[25] Sir Henry James, *Photo-Zincography* (Southampton: Forbes & Bennett, 1860), p. 5. See also David McKitterick, *Old Books, New Technologies: The Representation, Conservation and Transformation of Books since 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ch. 6.

[26] Gerard Curtis, *Visual Words: Art and the Material Book in Victorian England* (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 1.

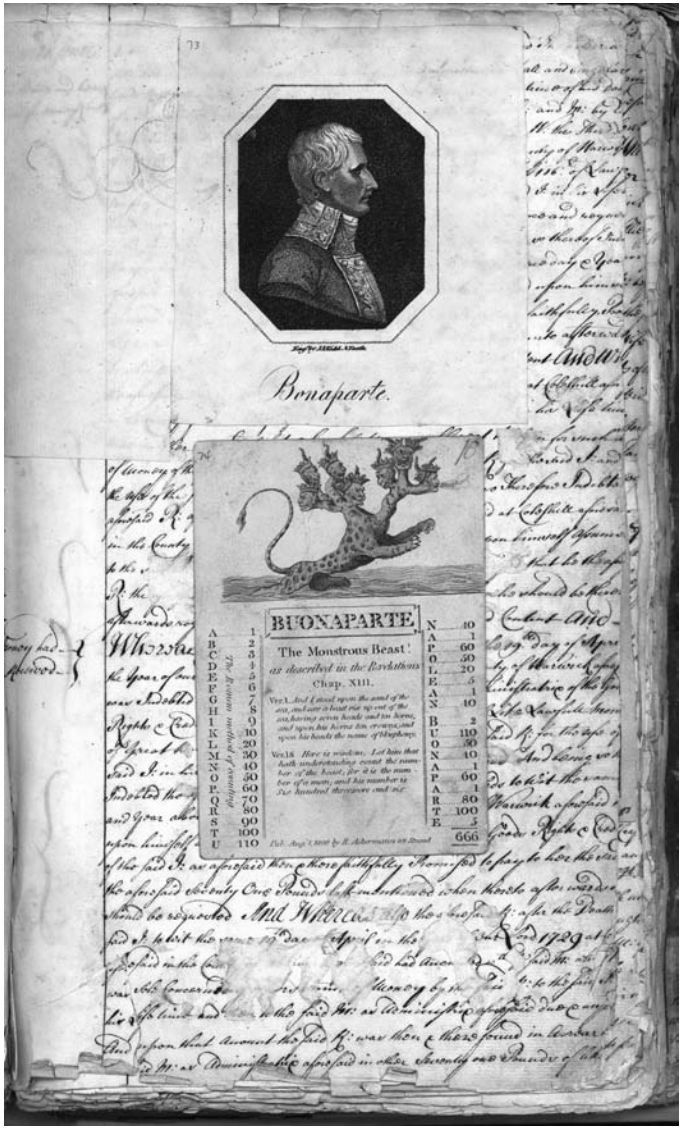


FIGURE 1.3 Nineteenth-Century lithographs pasted on top of an earlier commonplace book. Ackermann printed the second image, portraying Napoleon, "The Monstrous Beast! As described in the Revelations." Napoleon's name, when each letter is assigned a number according to "The Roman Method of Counting," is shown to add up to the devil's number, 666. Ackermann's Lithographs Pasted into a Nineteenth-Century Commonplace Book, MSS Codex 0322, Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.

While early photography, like the silver-plated copper Daguerreotype, was too heavy to paste into a scrapbook, by 1841, William Henry Fox Talbot had invented a new method that used paper coated with silver iodide. These developments significantly reduced the price of accurate reproductions, and, as David McKitterick explains, transformed printing "from a world where photographically illustrated books involved laborious pasting-in of images to one where images could be cheaply and fairly quickly reproduced."[27] These technologies allowed reading material to be not just textual, but also visual. This is true of scrapbooks as well. As Sharon Marcus notes, by the end of the Victorian period, the increasing availability of photography "had a transformative effect on the scrapbook so that many albums in the 1870s and 1880s became hybridised between scrapbook and photograph album."[28] The popular *cartes-de-visite*—small photographs of around 9 × 6 cm pasted onto card stock—allowed scrapbookers to collect the likeness of celebrities such as Queen Victoria or the poet laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson, along with quotations.[29]

These technological innovations facilitated a market for "News-Cutting Books." The publisher John Walker (who had published the 1799 *New Commonplace Book* described earlier in this chapter) turned his attention to marketing prefabricated scrapbooks during the Victorian period. Walker began his *Century Scrap & Newscutting Book* with a very short introduction (especially when compared to the pages of introductory material included in his *New Commonplace Book*): "Specifically prepared for those who desire to conveniently keep their Cuttings relating to all subjects in book form for ready reference, and who may wish to make marginal notes."[30] An alphabetical index followed the title page. Clearly these books were designed for new reading practices that relied on ephemeral newsprint rather than costly

[27] David McKitterick, *Old Books, New Technologies*, p. 128.

[28] Sharon Marcus, "Re: Sources," *Theatre Survey* 54, no. 2 (May 2013): 283–307.

[29] For more on the Carte-de-Visite tradition, see Annie Rudd, "Victorians Living in Public: Cartes de Visite as 19th-Century Social Media," *Photography and Culture* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 195–217 and John Plunkett, "Celebrity and Community: The Poetics of the Carte-de-Visite," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 55–79.

[30] This quotation and the following description come from Robert Ross's collection of news-cuttings kept in Walker's Century Scrap and Newscutting Book (British Library, 81826. Eccles Bequest. Vol. CCVIII. 1914–1918).

books of poetry. As the scrapbook tradition provided a space to contain ephemera, it also allowed for marginalia. In a world where literature was frequently produced and read outside of standard book-form (in periodicals, for example) the scrapbook answered a desire to return to the codex, and the organizational features associated with it—specifically, the index, space for marginalia, and sturdy covers.[31]

Significantly, it wasn't until the end of the century that readers and writers viewed commonplace books and scrapbooks as separate traditions. Hence, the following pages explore how the scrapbook grew from within the commonplace-book tradition—indeed, one of the first appearances of the term "Scrap Book" in 1821 referred to "a collection of Amusing and Striking Pieces in Prose and Verse"[32] in the tradition of printed commonplace books. The term "scrap" was meant to convey the book's fragmentary contents as the epigraph, attributed to Shakespeare, underscores: "A thing of shreds and patches."[33] The introduction explains that this book is meant for the working person—"the student, the merchant, the farmer"[34]—who hasn't the time to wade through an entire novel. As print cheapened, more readers cut and pasted it into their commonplace books to save the labor of transcription. Yet even as some writers distinguished between books of scraps and commonplace books, the distinction remained blurry.

Even the literature of the nineteenth century remains ambivalent about the commonplace book in relation to the scrapbook. Some articles, like one in *The British Mother's Journal*, draw a sharp distinction between commonplace books and scrapbooks: Edward tells his mother, "I shall try to write some of your observations in my commonplace book, which papa calls my 'wisdom-book,' in contrast with my scrap-book, which is full of anecdotes."[35] Similarly, *Chambers's*

[31] While most books from the Victorian period have withstood the ravages of time, because so much of the material enclosed in nineteenth-century scrapbooks were printed on cheap paper laced with acid, these collections are in fact some of the most fragile manuscripts in our archives. Until recently, the scrapbook has not been given the scholarly attention it deserves, which is all the more unfortunate, considering how quickly many of these collections have fallen into disrepair.

[32] John McDiarmid, *The Scrap Book: Containing a Collection of Amusing and Striking Pieces in Prose and Verse* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1821).

[33] McDiarmid, *The Scrap Book*, title page.

[34] McDiarmid, *The Scrap Book*, p. iv.

[35] *British Mother's Journal*, p. 256.

claims that transcribed extracts are more useful than those that are cut-and-pasted. "The pasting of printed cuttings in a scrap-book or the purchase of a commonplace-book ready-made will not answer the purpose. The extracts must be selected, arranged and copied by the person who is to turn them to profit."[36] Other publications view the two traditions as roughly interchangeable. *Young Folks*, after focusing on the commonplace tradition, explores "another kind of commonplace-book . . . a receptacle for newspaper cuttings."[37] Another example, taken from the fictional world of Baker Street, brings us to Sherlock Holmes's sitting room, where he keeps several "ponderous commonplace books in which he placed his cuttings."[38] We learn that these "cuttings" come exclusively from newspaper articles, and that Holmes has a bound manuscript for every letter of the alphabet: "When our visitor was silent Holmes stretched out his hand and took down letter 'S' of his commonplace book."[39] That Doyle used the word "commonplace book" to describe what more easily fits the definition of a scrapbook conveys how these terms were interchangeable as they fulfilled a similar purpose: to collect and organize information for later use. Holmes's organizational structure is even more telling—he structures his notes by topic, arranged alphabetically.

As print technology developed through the century, the need to transcribe material diminished even further. (Why write out a quotation by hand when one could simply cut it from a newspaper and paste it for later reference?) For this reason, it is not surprising to find William Howes Groser (a specialist in Sunday School education) recommending that teachers keep two notebooks with Todd's index: one for "*written* extracts" as well as "a scrap-book to hold clippings from all sources."[40] Groser advises teachers to "use the scissors as freely as circumstances will permit, placing their gatherings in a large envelope

[36] "Commonplace-Books," in *Chambers's Journal*, vol. 57 (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1880), pp. 216–217.

[37] "The Editor's Chair," *Young Folk's Paper*, April 24, 1886: 268.

[38] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1992), p. 222.

[39] Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, p. 155.

[40] William Howse Groser, *The Sunday School Teacher's Manual; Or: The Principles and Methods of Instruction as Applied to Sunday School Work* (London: Sunday School Union, 1877), pp. 50–51.

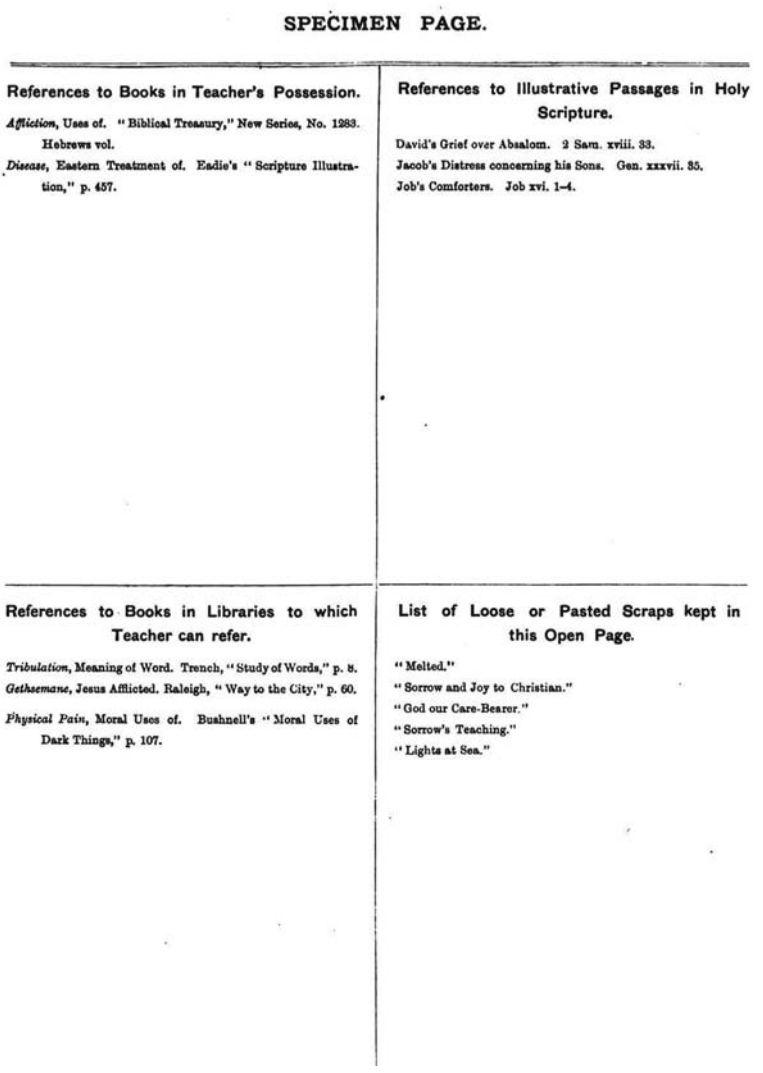
gummed inside the cover of the scrap-book, until they can be inserted in their proper places, numbered and indexed in the same manner as MS extracts."[41] Freedom with the scissors replaced discipline with the pen, because collecting extracts required far less labor. Groser's *Manual* inspired Robert Tuck's *The Sunday School Teacher's Scrap Book and Library Index*. Tuck combined Groser's two notebooks into one and added Todd's index. Additionally, he designed pages to hold written citations and pasted scraps.

> The arrangement adopted in this "Scrap Book" has been in part suggested by Mr. W. H. Groser's advice on the gathering and assorting illustrations in the "Teacher's Manual,"[42] by Dr. Todd's recommendation of an "Index Rerum," by Dr. James Hamilton's explanations of his "Vade Mecum," but more particularly by the actual experience of the compiler during some twenty years of varied service to Sunday-school teachers.[43]

Tuck designed his book to help teachers collect information from a variety of media—"from observation, or from magazines and books."[44] He expected that teachers would use their collection of extracts to illustrate their lessons. Tuck includes printed directions: after an extensive list of suggested topics, he offers an example of how the user might fill the blank spaces (see Figure 1.4).

Of note, Tuck's *Scrap Book and Library Index* divides references by a text's location, assuming readers would own some of the books referenced and access others in local libraries. Some texts, however, might be held in distant places, and thus relatively inaccessible, making it necessary for the user to devote an entire recto to transcribing quotations. The two right columns divide between passages from scripture and listings of cuttings. These cuttings would have been affixed to the recto's inner margin, which contains the following directions: "For pasting scraps by their corners or edges; or for inserting *extra pages* on which scraps may be fully pasted."[45] In short, Tuck's *Scrap Book and*

[41] Groser, *The Sunday School Teacher's Manual*, pp. 50–51.
[42] Groser, *The Sunday School Teacher's Manual*, pp. 50–51.
[43] Robert Tuck, *The Sunday School Teacher's Scrap Book and Library Index* (London: The Sunday School Union, 1885), preface.
[44] Tuck, *The Sunday School Teacher's Scrap Book*, preface.
[45] Tuck, *Scrap Book and Library Index*, n.p.



SPECIMEN PAGE.

References to Books in Teacher's Possession.

Affliction, Uses of. "Biblical Treasury," New Series, No. 1283. Hebrews vol.

Disease, Eastern Treatment of. Eadie's "Scripture Illustration," p. 457.

References to Illustrative Passages in Holy Scripture.

David's Grief over Absalom. 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

Jacob's Distress concerning his Sons. Gen. xxxvii. 35.

Job's Comforters. Job xvi. 1–4.

References to Books in Libraries to which Teacher can refer.

Tribulation, Meaning of Word. Trench, "Study of Words," p. 8.

Gethsemane, Jesus Afflicted. Raleigh, "Way to the City," p. 60.

Physical Pain, Moral Uses of. Bushnell's "Moral Uses of Dark Things," p. 107.

List of Loose or Pasted Scraps kept in this Open Page.

"Melted."

"Sorrow and Joy to Christian."

"God our Care-Bearer."

"Sorrow's Teaching."

"Lights at Sea."

FIGURE 1.4 Robert Tuck, *The Sunday School Teacher's Scrap Book and Library Index*, 1885.

Library Index and Groser's *The Sunday School Teacher's Manual* demonstrate how Victorians remediated the handwritten commonplace book.[46]

Personal Organizational Systems

With as many ways to organize a commonplace book as there were compilers, readers wanted to learn about celebrated figures' methods. One of the most famous printed commonplace books of the nineteenth century belonged to Robert Southey. His commonplace books would recirculate posthumously in four printed volumes, edited by his son-in-law, John Warter Wood. Because Southey had planned on publishing his collection, most entries are strikingly impersonal.[47] Though Wood attempted to check Southey's quotations and citations, if the reader were to find an error, he explains, it is only a testament to "the wonderful stores, the accumulated learning, and the unlimited research, of the excellently single-hearted, the devout, and gifted Collector."[48] Wood's preface introduces Southey's collection as a rare glimpse into the literary practices of a great reader. Southey, we are told, read quickly and extensively. In the first edition, Wood quotes from a letter his father-in-law had written in 1822, comparing his extensive reading and collection of quotations to an antique collector:

> Like those persons who frequent sales, and fill their houses with useless purchases, because they may want them some time or other; so am I for ever making collections and storing up materials which may not come into use till the Greek Calends. And this I have been doing for five and twenty years! It is true that I draw daily upon my hoards, and should be poor without them; but in prudence I ought now to be working up those materials rather than adding to so much dead stock.[49]

[46] J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

[47] See Pamela Woof, "The Uses of Notebooks," *The Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 31, (Summer 2008): 15.

[48] Robert Southey, *Southey's Common-Place Book*, edited by John Warter Wood (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850–1), p. iii.

[49] John Warter Wood, "Preface," *Southey's Common-Place Book*, p. v.

Southey transformed his "dead stock" into what Dahlia Porter calls "a saleable commodity" with the publication of his poems.[50] Southey's son-in-law would go one step further and package the poet laureate's raw materials into an expensive collection—each volume sold from between eighteen shillings to one guinea.[51] A full collection of Southey's volumes would have been extravagantly expensive to own. Thankfully, Mudie's Select Library, one of the nineteenth century's most popular lending libraries, carried all the volumes of Southey's printed commonplace books.[52]

In addition to demonstrating morality and good taste, other editors of printed commonplace books modeled what we now call critical reading. They taught the reader to converse with texts. For example, the historian Anna Jameson hopes her popular collection, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories and Fancies*, might spark new ideas and interests in her audience. After all, she explains that printing one's commonplace book

> . . . can do good only in one way. It may, like conversation with a friend, open up sources of sympathy and reflection; excite to argument, agreement, or disagreement; and, like every spontaneous utterance of thought out of an earnest mind, suggest far higher and better thoughts than any to be found here to higher and more productive minds. If I had not the humble hope of such a possible result, instead of sending these memoranda to the printer, I should have thrown them into the fire . . .[53]

Rather than incinerating her memoranda, Jameson hoped that publishing her collection might encourage new, better ideas within her readers. In other words, the utility of this commonplace book rests entirely in the reader's hands. It is a modest work, in her opinion: "truly

[50] Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 119. See also Dahlia Porter, "Poetics of the Commonplace: Composing Robert Southey," *The Wordsworth Circle* 42, no. 1 (2011): 27–33.

[51] As a point of comparison, in 1815, a ham and potato dinner for two would have been around seven shillings.

[52] *Catalogue of the Principal Books in Circulation at Mudie's Select Library, January, 1865* (London: Mudie's Select Library, 1865).

[53] Anna Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies . . .* (London: Longman, 1854), p. vi.

what its name sets forth—a book of common-places and nothing more."[54] In the Victorian period, Jameson was known for her histories of art and literature. Her prolific writing career, we learn, was supported by her devotion to commonplacing.

> For many years I have been accustomed to make a memorandum of any thought which might come across me—(if pen and paper were at hand), and to mark (and *remark* any passage in a book which excited either a sympathetic or an antagonistic feeling. This collection of notes accumulated insensibly from day to day. The volumes on Shakespeare's Women, on Sacred and Legendary Art, and various other productions, sprung from seed thus lightly and casually sown . . . But what was to be done with the fragments which remained—without beginning or end—links of a hidden or broken chain?[55]

Jameson offers a challenge for her reader. There might be another study hidden in these leftover, unpublished bits of her commonplace practice; perhaps her readers might discover the "links of a . . . chain" in the extracts. Yet, to accomplish such a task requires a particular kind of reader—one who is attuned to omission, skilled at argumentation, and able to find connections among extracts.

Anna Jameson's *Commonplace Book of Thoughts* resembles Locke's and Southey's in the way she interweaves quotations with her own reflections, modeling a form of responsive reading. Yet one of the problems with engaged note-taking is that it can become difficult to sort the original from the borrowed. "[A]ll those passages which are marked by inverted commas must be regarded as borrowed, though I have not always been able to give my authority. All passages not so marked are, I dare not say, original or new, but at least the unstudied expression of a free discursive mind."[56] Jameson models an active form of reading with her "free discursive mind," which often interweaves itself into quotations. For the most part, she reflects on others' ideas. For instance, she contemplates historical difference, often as it relates to gender.

[54] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. v.
[55] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, pp. v–vi.
[56] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. vii.

> I READ in the life of Garrick that, "about 1741, a taste for Shakespeare had lately been revived by the encouragement of some distinguished persons of taste of both sexes; but more especially by the ladies who formed themselves into a society, called the 'Shakespeare Club.'" There exists a Shakespeare Society at this present time, but I do not know that any ladies are members of it, or allowed to be so.[57]

Jameson never simply offers quotations for her readers, but wraps them in her own essayistic prose, demonstrating a way of reflecting on and engaging with her reading. Hers is a questioning mind that does not readily accept what she reads as truth. The most obvious example of her proclivity to enter into a text comes in the form of her revision of Wordsworth's "A Happy Warrior." Jameson uses this poem to illustrate the fallacy in "the belief that there are essential masculine and feminine virtues and vices."[58] She first illustrates this point "by quoting the axiom of the Greek philosopher Antisthenes . . . 'The virtue of the man and the woman is the same.'"[59] This, she points out, is "a sort of anticipation of the Christian doctrine."[60] Following this ancient reference, Jameson turns to "an illustration which is at once practical and poetical, and plain to the most prejudiced among men or women"[61]—an adaptation of Wordsworth's "The Happy Warrior." While this poem originally referred to a man, Jameson demonstrates how it might equally refer to women by changing every instance of the word "warrior" to "woman," and revising gendered pronouns. Doing so reveals that "almost from beginning to end it is literally as applicable to the one sex as to the other."[62]

> CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WOMAN.
> Who is the happy *woman*? Who is *she*
> That every *woman* born should wish to be?
> It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
> Among the tasks of real life, had wrought
> Upon the plan that pleased *her* childish thought;

[57] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 305.
[58] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 85.
[59] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 86.
[60] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 86.
[61] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 86.
[62] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 87.

> Whose high endeavours are an inward light,
> That make the path before *her* always bright . . .[63]

With her revisions, Jameson exhibits a kind of readerly engagement that makes a text's assumptions or prejudices visible in order to interrogate them. While Wordsworth meant his poem to portray ideals of masculinity, Jameson uses it to make the opposite point. These lines, in her view, transcend gender and refer to humanity in general.

Other writers published descriptions of their commonplace method in response to public demand. Consider, for example, the Victorian journalist George Augustus Sala, who began his commonplace book on January 30, 1858 and continued to date entries through the 1880s. In 1883, Sala published an account of his practice in *Living London* because, as he explains, "Scarcely a week passes without bringing me letters from correspondents who ask me to explain my own system of keeping a commonplace book."[64] And so he explains his system, which includes dating entries as though his book was a diary and pasting scraps of newsprint to document his own illustrious career. Sala boasted that his indexing system lasted for decades and helped him assemble upwards of 5,000 entries.

> I have but one system, and it possesses one merit, that of rugged simplicity. Take a book, large or small, according to the size of your handwriting, and take care that at the end of the book there shall be plenty of space for an index. Begin at the beginning, and make your entries precisely as they occur to you in unordered sequence. But after each entry place a little circle, or oval, or parenthesis ( ), and in a portion of these spaces place consecutive numbers . . . I have one common-place book that has been "cooking" ever since 1858, and is not half finished yet. The last entry is numbered (5068).[65]

"Rugged simplicity" is not necessarily the term that comes to mind when reading Sala's crowded pages. He fills each page with tightly

[63] Jameson, *A Commonplace Book of Thoughts*, p. 87.

[64] George Augustus Sala, *Living London: Being Echoes Reechoed* (London: Remington, 1883), p. 259.

[65] Sala, *Living London*, p. 259. In truth, Sala stopped numbering his entries at 4455, though he continued to place empty circles alongside entries (as seen in Figure 1.5)—enough to reach 5068 when we factor in the 224 roman numerals that preceded entries with Arabic lettering at the manuscript's beginning.

FIGURE 1.5 George Augustus Sala, Commonplace Book, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, MA 390. Acquired by Pierpont Morgan, 1907.

written script, offers marginal comments, and diligently dates entries, making it clear that his commonplace book also serves as a kind of "literary diary." Additionally, Sala numbers entries in red ink and indexes them in the back of the book, where he cut into pages to make tabs for his own alphabetical index (see Figure 1.5).

Sala used the codex to preserve information, images, and jokes, but because he operated within a distinctly Victorian media-ecology he also preserved newsprint and images. The inside cover and flyleaf attest to the intermedial nature of Sala's collection. The manuscript begins with Sala's name, a motto—"by the grace of god"—and his London address. The rest of the inside cover and flyleaf are taken over with newspaper cuttings and notes, demonstrating the equivalency of scraps of paper and scraps of thought. Consider how Sala cut and pasted the printer Lionel Lawson's obituary and also wrote the date of death in the margin. This demonstrates two important shifts in commonplacing: readers often cut and pasted texts and they marked entries as especially personal, rather than universal. Indeed, as Arthur Lee Humphreys wrote at the end of the Victorian period, "In the matter of note-books, I am sure that it is best for every one to make notes in the way best suited to his convenience."[66] Some might find copying extracts an inconvenience, others are so concerned with tidying their notebooks

[66] Arthur Lee Humphreys, *The Private Library: What We Do Know, What We Don't Know, What We Ought to Know about our Books* (London: Strangeways & Sons, 1897), p. 41.

that they miss out on the true purpose of reading, which is (according to Humphreys) to acquire knowledge. After all, "no note-book or commonplace-book should take the place of the natural memory."[67] This ancient conflict between natural and artificial memory took on a new dimension as Lockean Empiricism and Kantian Idealism restructured cultures of knowledge. The next section, "Organizing Ideas," will examine how Romantics and Victorians entwined elements of the diary, scrapbook, and commonplace book, often for contradictory purposes. Coleridge would weave personal reflections throughout quotations (not unlike Jameson's revision of Wordsworth's poem); while Faraday time-stamped entries as a mark of objectivity; meanwhile, antiquarians cut-and-pasted authentic documents as empirical proof for historical arguments. Thus, contents of commonplace books became increasingly specific and personal, rather than generally applicable.

[67] Humphreys, *The Private Library*, p. 39.

PART I

Organizing Ideas

2

Commonplace Books of the Imagination

> One Habit, formed during long Absences from those, with whom I could converse with full Sympathy has been of Advantage to me—that of daily writing down, in my memorandum or Common-place Books, both Incidents and Observations; whatever had occurred to me from without, and all the Flux and reflux of my Mind within itself.[1]
>
> To restore a common-place truth to its first *uncommon* lustre, you need only *translate* it into action. But to do this, you must have *reflected* on its truth.[2]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge worried that new print technologies had spawned a nation of automatons. His contemporaries had access to a dizzying array of affordable texts including printed collections of extracts, newspapers, and sensational fiction;[3] rather than pastimes, Coleridge quipped, they ought to be considered "kill-times."[4]

[1] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend*, ed. B. E. Rooke, 2 vols (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1969), 2: 16–17.

[2] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 16 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969–2017), 9: 11.

[3] The gothic novel rose to prominence in the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, Penny Bloods (or, Penny Dreadfuls) swamped the market. See Anna Gasperini, *Nineteenth Century Popular Fiction, Medicine and Anatomy: The Victorian Penny Blood and the 1832 Anatomy Act* (Basel: Springer, 2019).

[4] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, in *The Collected Works . . . : Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 1: 48n.

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums.
Jillian M. Hess, Oxford University Press. © Jillian M. Hess 2022. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895318.003.0003

These new print technologies offered a profusion of reading material, which Coleridge worried would lull readers into a mental dullness through the work of what he calls "a sort of mental *camera obscura* manufactured at the printing office."[5] Coleridge uses the early camera as a metaphor to indicate passive fixity—an immediate and unalterable imprint.[6] This was in direct contrast to the active forms of reading Coleridge advocated: it is not enough to simply read, one must work over material to turn it into something useful.[7] Throughout his life, Coleridge thought about ways to make learning useful and aspired to write a work that would assist "the business of real life."[8] Under the title *Organum verè Organum, or an Instrument of practical Reasoning in the business of real Life*, he planned an introduction to Aristotelian logic; commentary on thinkers such as Remus, Bacon, Descartes, and Condilliac; and, by means of conclusion, "instructions, how to form a commonplace Book [*sic*] . . . so as to read with practical advantage."[9] Few would think of Samuel Taylor Coleridge as a great theorist of the commonplace, yet that is precisely what this chapter aims to demonstrate. I make two claims for Samuel Taylor Coleridge's vast collection of notebooks: first, that they should be reassessed as a revision of the commonplace-book tradition in line with Romanticism's commitment to the writer's internal world; and second, that his experiments with note-taking reveal how Coleridge thought about "common-place truths" and their application to personal contemplation.

[5] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 48.

[6] Coleridge also viewed the camera obscura as a remarkable (even magical) technology, not just as a debilitating force. In the 1820s he would fantasize over "a sort of spiritual *Camera obscura* that could reflect the constructions in my brain and fix them." *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by E. L. Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 6: 1596; see *Collected Letters*, 5: 1225 for a similar sentiment. For more on the camera obscura in Romantic England, see Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

[7] Coleridge took issue with reading practices, not print technologies, which he followed closely as an editor of periodicals. While working on *The Friend*, he worried that "no Press—one of Lord Stanhope's construction it should be—can be procured ready-made." Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 3: 177. Here he refers to Charles Stanhope, who, as he worked with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads*, produced the first cast-iron press that would facilitate production of cheap books. The steam-powered rotary press quickly followed, and in 1814 the *London Times* became the first newspaper to adopt it.

[8] To William Godwin, 1803. *Collected Letters*, 2: 947.

[9] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 2: 504. For a similar recommendation of the commonplace method in relation to *Organum verè Organum,* see *Collected Letters*, 6: 541.

Scholarship tends to think of Coleridge as diminishing over his career, from a celebrated poet to a mad note-taker, yet his later commonplace books reveal the opposite to be true. He remained a strong writer long after the publication of *Biographia Literaria* in 1817 and through the 1820s with his Victorian best-seller *Aids to Reflection*, in which Coleridge provides a method "of giving freshness and importance to the most *common-place* maxims."[10] A sustained engagement with Coleridge's note-taking practices reveals that his notebooks are, as Seamus Perry claims, "the undeclared prose masterpiece of the period."[11] They are also among the most ambitious reckonings with commonplace-book form after Locke.

Nearly a hundred years after Coleridge's death, a professor set out on another lifelong project: assembling a scholarly edition of Coleridge's extracts and notes. Kathleen Coburn published the edition's first volume in 1957, while the last volume was edited by Anthony John Harding after Coburn's death and published in 2002. Of note, Coburn began work on the notebooks by taking photographs[12] and quickly recognized that it would be impossible to create a useful resource for scholars by preserving the "chaos" of each page.

> . . . it was apparent at an early stage in the editing, and became more so as the work progressed, that short of a photographic reproduction of the pages, a turning out of the chaos of notebook after notebook would not be very useful to students. An attempt has been made therefore at a chronological presentation.[13]

With an orderly index and discrete entries, Coburn's edition reins in Coleridge's notes to make them more like the traditional commonplace book than they ever were in manuscript form. Her edition privileges clarity over the actual feel of reading through the notebooks. Because Coleridge did not always order his entries chronologically, dipping in and out of whatever notebooks he found readily available, Coburn

[10] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 11.

[11] Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 31.

[12] See Kathleen Coburn, *In Pursuit of Coleridge* (Ann Arbor: Bodley Head, 1977).

[13] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn et al. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957–2002), 1: xxi. Cited hereafter as *Collected Notebooks*.

rearranged the extracts and fractured the unity of single notebooks in the service of providing readers with a more approachable printed text—for this, Coleridge scholars owe Coburn a debt of gratitude. Still, it is important to note that reading Coburn's edition differs from reading the notebooks as Coleridge himself organized them. Coleridge's notations are not linear, but rather, recursive and reiterative. He writes notes to himself throughout and often explains the seeming randomness of entries. Having misplaced "Flycatcher no. VII," Coleridge started what is now Notebook 40 with the comment "Till the genuine No VII is turned up."[14] At around the same time, he explained, "All my small books are written thro'—and I must take to this, as a continuation of my 'Fly Catchers[']— counting 25 leaves or 50 pages for each number."[15] In Notebook 20, he reminds himself that a series of extracts are "Transcripts from my Velvet-writing-paper Pocket Books."[16] And then there are the many pages that Coleridge tore out. While it is impossible to know what they contained, some retain fragments of lines, left visible by an imprecise tearing. In Notebook 21, a torn page contains the desperate lines, written in a larger hand than usual, perhaps a sign of Coleridge's distress: "To my friends, Conscious, I am dying, I feel unutterable consolation from the sense of the intensity and the . . ."[17] On this page, and others, the omission is not textual so much as material.

The textual and material richness of Coleridge's notes, combined with his extensive marginalia, have, over the past few decades, emerged as an extraordinary example of Romantic life-writing. Since Harding called for a "material hermeneutics of literature" in 2000, scholars have begun to decipher the "huge cumulus"[18] of Coleridge's notes. The notebooks present a generic puzzle. Paul Cheshire admits, "The question of genre is difficult,"[19] while Seamus Perry suggests that "the main point of the notebook as a genre is the avoidance of conclusion or

[14] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: xxxiii; British Library Add MS 47535.
[15] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: 6657; BL Add MS 47545.
[16] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1230; BL Add MS 47518.
[17] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 2: 3273; BL Add MS 47518.
[18] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 3: 418.
[19] Paul Cheshire, "Coleridge's Notebooks," *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Frederick Burwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 295.

closure which its *ad hoc* life allows, or demands…"[20] Josie Dixon claims that the notebooks are a "fascinating generic hybrid of journal, travelogue, sketchbook and commonplace book," or, put another way, "writings-without-a-genre."[21] Those who have studied Coleridge's notebooks do so primarily to understand the writer and the Romantic period. And yet, the fascinating form Coleridge's notes took needs to be contextualized within a larger history of Romantic-era note-taking, supported, as it was, by the commonplace tradition.

The structure of entries in Coleridge's commonplace books matured symbiotically with his philosophy of mind; the way he arranged his extracts and ideas allowed him to express (both linguistically and materially) the synthesizing power of the imagination and the spiritual power of reflection. His collection developed over the span of nearly forty years, expanding from short, separable entries (in the Gutch commonplace book of the late 1790s,[22] for example) towards larger, more heterogeneous notes that move towards greater synthesis of information (in the Fly-Catchers, 1827–1834). As Coleridge immersed himself in transcendental idealism and Christian theology, he experimented with note-taking structures that would enable synthesis—encapsulated in the epigraph he chose for his Fly-Catchers (1827–1834): "Unus Multorum." The multiple forms of Coleridge's commonplace books are a function of his continued search for a way to organize seemingly divergent kinds of knowledge into a cohesive unity.

Throughout his life, Coleridge engaged different theories of mind. In his early years, he proclaimed a deep affinity for the theory of *associationism*, a belief that ideas, regarded as sensations, develop through association with other ideas. He admired David Hartley's *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations* (1749), a work that attempted to find a physiological basis for associationism as Locke had

[20] Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 31.

[21] Josie Dixon, "The Notebooks," *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, edited by Lucy Newlyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 75. Similarly, Pamela Woof examines the differences among journals, albums, and commonplace books while comparing Dorothy Wordsworth's diaries and Coleridge's; see "The Uses of Notebooks: From Journal to Album, from Commonplace to Keepsake," *The Coleridge Bulletin* 31 (Summer 2008): 19.

[22] Coburn notes that Coleridge used this commonplace book from 1795 to January of 1800. See *Collected Notebooks*, 1: xviii–xix n.

discussed it in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). Coleridge was so taken with Hartley's theories that he named his son after him; however, by the time Coleridge sat down to write *Biographia Literaria* (1817), his opinions had changed drastically—so much so that he wrote three chapters arguing that Hartley's theory of associationism was not plausible. Coleridge claimed that had Hartley been right, "the consequence would have been, that our whole life would be divided between the despotism of outward impressions, and that of senseless and passive memory."[23] Just as Coleridge dismissed Hartlean materialism, he admitted that he could not find "an abiding place for my reason" in Locke's work, but that Kant's writing "took possession of me as with a giant's hand."[24] Coleridge rejected Empiricism's insistence on sense experience as the ultimate source of knowledge. Though he made his admiration for Kant known, it is perhaps fitting that Coleridge rarely accepted Kant's ideas without first altering them. For instance, Christoph Bode explains that Coleridge had a great deal of trouble with Kant's idea of *noumena* and its a priori knowledge.[25] Indeed, Coleridge's theology proved troublesome for any full adoption of Kantian ideas. Unlike Kant, Coleridge refused to limit Reason, and viewed it as "an organ of faith."[26] Furthermore, religious concepts such as grace and redemption were central to Coleridgean epistemology, though notably absent from Kant's writings.[27] Nevertheless, Kantian ethics served as a foundation for Coleridge's philosophy. As James Vigus notes, Coleridge makes "far more explicit assertions of the truth of Christianity than Kant would ever allow, but nevertheless from a Kantian basis."[28]

What would it mean to take Coleridge's religious writings seriously? Far from a theological aberration as some critics have argued, Coleridge's late works, such as the "spiritual exercises" of *Aids to Reflection*, are, as Douglas Hedley remarks, "the most trenchant and

[23] *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 111.

[24] *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 153.

[25] Christoph Bode, "Coleridge and Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 595.

[26] René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England, 1793–1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), p. 105.

[27] Bode, "Coleridge and Philosophy," p. 602.

[28] James Vigus, "The Philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by W. J. Mander (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 520–40, p. 534.

characteristic expression of Coleridge's mind."[29] Taking a more expansive view of Coleridge's cognizance, by investigating the range of his varied and various notebooks, further proves Hedley's point. I conclude this chapter with *Aids to Reflection*, which I read as Coleridge's ultimate statement of the commonplace method as a part of his rational religion—or, put another way, spiritual philosophy. Coleridge's commonplace entries consistently strive to fuse disparate fields of thought into a cohesive "system" that could account for both philosophy and religion.

"The trouble with Coleridge," Heather Jackson reflects, "is the embarrassment of riches . . ."[30] Here she refers to Coleridge's marginalia, which she observes serves an adjacent function to his more extensive notes. "Though there is a certain overlapping of functions, by and large the margins are for rapid response and the notebooks are for storing up materials for future use. The notebooks take in extracts and serve the purpose of a commonplace-book without imposing the usual alphabetical organization."[31] The "alphabetical organization" Jackson refers to is, of course, a reference to methods like Locke's and that of his imitators. Like the marginalia, Coleridge's notebook entries follow different strategies for organization. Ultimately, I examine Coleridge's collection of notes and extracts as my source text in this chapter to investigate how particular structures for organizing information not only act "as a stimulus to thinking in certain ways" but also mirror particular structures of thought in its very form.[32]

By necessity this chapter does not aim to offer a complete analysis of Coleridge's notebooks, but rather to investigate his various alternatives to "the usual alphabetical organization" of commonplace books. The following section offers a general overview of the notebooks and what they meant to Coleridge. From there, I illuminate four stages in Coleridge's note-taking—stages that fall into a biographical progression, even as his use of the notebooks was not strictly chronological. These sections congregate around particular concerns that followed him throughout his remarkably productive career, as well as the

[29] Douglas Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion: Aids to Reflection and the Mirror of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 17.

[30] H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 268.

[31] Jackson, *Marginalia*, p. 278.

[32] Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion*, p. 11.

names he gave his notebooks. To begin, I explore Coleridge's training in classical rhetoric as a student and his earliest commonplace books; then, I turn to his Lake District commonplace books with their loco-descriptive contents; third, I examine his dealings with philosophy and his struggle to find a form for his notes on transcendental idealism; and finally, I look to his religious notes in the "Fly-Catchers" and the aphoristic form, which he theorized as a way to revitalize commonplaces.

The Notebooks: An Overview

Coleridge referred to what we have come to call his "notebooks" by many names—as his "full confidantes," "day books," "memorandum-books," "fly-catchers," and "common-place books." While scholarship does not generally regard Coleridge's extensive collection of notebooks as commonplace books, he certainly thought of them as such. In a 1797 letter, Coleridge explained, "as I have few books of my own, I read with a common-place book."[33] Describing his collection as a repository for quotations from other texts, Coleridge placed his commonplace book in a long history of readers compiling extracts for personal reference. By 1812, however, he described his commonplace books differently. By this time, he understood them not just as records of other authors' works, but as collections of new material for publication. Writing to James Murray, one of his publishers, in 1812, Coleridge explained, "In the huge cumulus of my Memorandum and common-place books I have at least two respectable volumes."[34] Over two decades later, in 1829, he reminded himself, "I might quote to illustrate & confirm this exposition (in my red-backed Folio Common-Place Book)."[35] To be clear, my concern is not that scholarship rename Coleridge's collection of notes, but rather, that we gain a deeper understanding of Coleridge's formal innovations as a note-taker when we understand his practice within the larger context of Romantic material culture.

[33] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 1: 323.
[34] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 3: 418. See *Collected Letters*, 5: 25 for a similar sentiment.
[35] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: 6041; BL Add MS 47536.

The commonplace books accompanied Coleridge throughout his life and come to us battered and worn as testimony to his intimate relationship with them. These were solitary engagements, though Sarah Coleridge and Charles Lamb transcribed several lines into them. For the most part, Coleridge was the only one to write in his collection during his lifetime, supporting his claim that he saw them as companions during times of isolation. They are filled with the personal, the literary, the philosophical, the theological, and the mundane—a reflection of Coleridge's mind without the aid of a master narrative to guide the reader through its multëity (to use Coleridge's term). Coleridge organized his commonplace books externally with numbers, written on labels pasted on their covers. Many of the covers and fly-leaves bear additional names. Some titles locate his notes in terms of place; he wrote "Lakes"[36] on the cover of a notebook he used to record observations from his fell-walking expeditions in the Lake District. Others designate topics such as "Collectanea | Psychologica, Logica | et | Metaphysica" as he did for what is now "Notebook 25."[37] Later commonplace books bear variations on the titles "fly-catcher" and "day-book": one of the last in the collection contains a title page identifying it as "Fly-Catcher | a day-book for impounding stray thoughts,"[38] and another announces itself as "Volatilia | or | Day-book | for bird-liming | ~~stray~~ Small Thoughts | impounding stray thoughts and holding for Trial doubtful Thoughts."[39]

In the variation of Coleridge's titles for his collection, we can see him working to redefine the tradition for himself as he alternately tries to rein in his ideas to fit general topics and then lets them take their own organic form. Accordingly, the early terms Coleridge used to describe his collection fit the idea of "general headings" such as Notebook 25's Psychology, Logic, and Metaphysics—all general fields of knowledge germane to the commonplace-book tradition. However, Coleridge's late titles dismantle the formal idea of a commonplace book. Far from the stability associated with commonplaces as culturally accepted and generally applicable sayings, Coleridge's terms imagine ideas as

[36] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: xxi n.; BL Add MS 47497.
[37] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: xxvi n.; BL Add MS 47523.
[38] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: xlv n.; BL Add MS 47536.
[39] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: l n.; Victoria College Library, Ms 21.

volatile and fickle entities, present in fleeting moments without the self-authenticating power imbued in commonplaces, or, for that matter, aphorisms—the quintessential form of an older Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825; 1831). Further, the instability of such ideas implied in their presentation as "flies" suggests their status as raw perceptions, awaiting the active mind to transform them into knowledge. The rhetoric of criminality describes their capture, imprisonment, and trial—a moment of transformation when "unfixed" thoughts might mature into "fixed" forms, or publishable ideas.

The notebooks' different forms reflect stages in Coleridge's thinking. In the first of the "Fly-Catchers," Coleridge explains that these notes, while he compiled them with a view to publication, are not publishable in themselves. Rather, they record thoughts organically, as they came into Coleridge's mind:

> N.B. The difference between the style in these Note-books[40] or Pugillaria,[41] and that in a work adapted to Publication is this: that the former represents the order in which the Truths were arrived at, the latter the order, ~~in~~ which, after the Thinker has them collectively before him, & can command them in a Synopsis, he judges the best suited to communicate them to the Hearer or Reader. (Turn to p. 8)[42]

Coleridge explains that his notebooks take a different form than his published works because they represent knowledge in formation, a collection of ideas written out in the order they presented themselves to "the Thinker." The work of publication, then, involves sifting through the collection and ordering the ideas in a way that others might understand. By the time Coleridge wrote this note, he had long abandoned grouping entries under general topics as he had done with some of his first commonplace books (discussed in the next section of this chapter). General topics placed an artificial order on notes, separating entries by categorizing them. Coleridge's mind did not work in such a linear fashion. Indeed, it would have been difficult for him to label any entry under a single topic. His notes are powerful because of their dynamic movements as they refuse to stand still or conform to

[40] In Coburn's transcription this is one word, but Coleridge used a hyphen.
[41] Latin word: of or belonging to the fist or hand, that can be held in the hand.
[42] *Collected Notebooks*, 5: 5533; BL Add MS 47528.

just one line of thought. Josie Dixon, emphasizing the exciting variability of Coleridge's notes, aptly compares "reading them successively" to looking through "a kaleidoscope offering brilliant flashes of meaning, each of which is always shifting, in search of a pattern that is new and yet somehow fundamentally the same."[43] Consider, for example, a page from March 1810 in the thick, leather-bound Notebook 18. The title Coleridge inscribed on the cover only begins to demonstrate the dizzying multitude found within: "1819 it's date | & not long before 1810 | Part 1805 | Malta | 1805 | Part 1815."[44]

Like most of the 174 leaves in Notebook 18, Coleridge has transcribed the names of his Grasmere circle—William Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, and, in Greek, an anagram for the name of his secret love, Sarah Hutchinson. The first two entries on the verso come from Fulke Grenville's *A Treatie on Warres*.[45] On the recto, Coleridge has turned his attention to his unfinished poem "Christabel"[46] (which would not be published until 1816), followed by two Pindar Fragments.[47] Separated by lines, the final entry on this page might be considered a diaristic entry—though certainly, the sentiment has literary precedence—as he writes: "Heaven preserve me from the modern Epidemic of a Proud Ignorance."[48] Coleridge would maintain his habit of striking dashes between entries, which proved to be an easier organizational tool than an index, as it quickly divided entries without categorizing them. And in any case, some entries resist indexing entirely: for example, how would Coleridge index the various arrangements of names written into the corners of this notebook? (See Figure 2.1.)

Throughout his considerable body of work, Coleridge improvised upon traditional genres—including, as this chapter aims to show, genres of note-taking. As Michael O'Neill explains, Coleridge's "instinct is towards a highly individualized version of traditional forms," which often involve a fusion of several genres. O'Neill illuminates how Coleridge's poems draw from multiple genres at once: he "transforms the genre of ballad in 'The Ancient Mariner'" and "does

[43] Dixon, "The Notebooks," p. 87.
[44] See *Collected Notebooks*, 2: xiv–xv n.; BL Add MS 47515.
[45] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3713; BL Add MS 47515.
[46] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3720; BL Add MS 47515.
[47] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3721–3722; BL Add MS 47515.
[48] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3723; BL Add MS 47515.

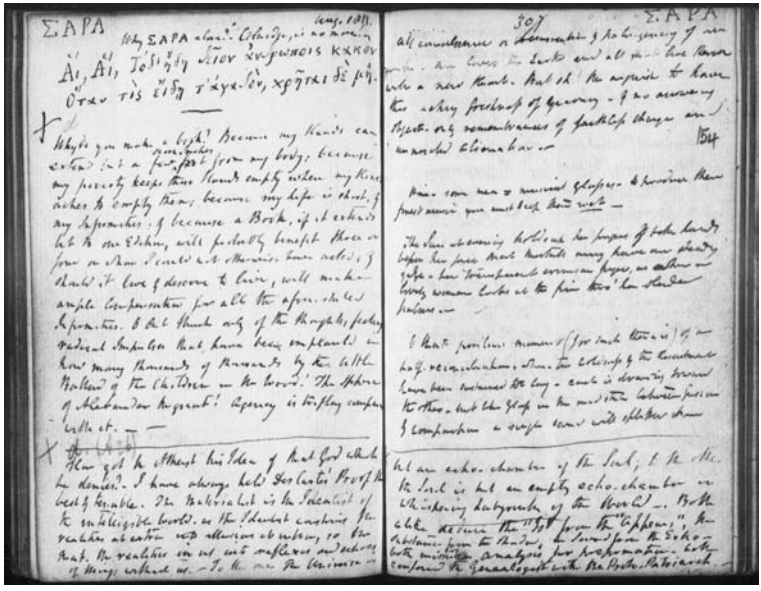


FIGURE 2.1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Notes © The British Library Board, Notebook 18, Misc. Add 47515.

something rich and strange with the genre of romance" in "Christabel."[49] Something similar unfolds in Coleridge's notebooks as he transforms the commonplace-book tradition into a dynamic combination of different genres of life-writing (the diary, the travelogue, the memorandum). It would be a mistake to say that Coleridge consciously aimed for generic hybridity in note-taking. Often, he attempts (and fails) to corral his thoughts into recognizable forms. In Notebook 21, for example, Coleridge tries multiple times to re-establish his collection as a more typical commonplace book, meant for an orderly arrangement of reading notes. As though inscribing a new year's resolution, he directs himself: "From Jan. 1817. This Book is devoted exclusively to a Book of Reference

[49] Michael O'Neill, "Coleridge's Genres," in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 381.

for the noticeable Pages of every Book, that I hence forward read." He even composed a simple poem to reinforce his method:

> One book at a time
> Read steadily thro
> Makes one's Thoughts chime
> And's the quickest way too!
> S.T.C.—

He wrote this above an earlier (now crossed-out) title, "Vocabulary | Of Greek Words, radical, or of most frequent Occurrence."[50] Evidently, Coleridge had attempted to turn this notebook into a dictionary,[51] given that he assigns a letter to each page, beginning with "A;" however, he hardly makes it to the letter "E," by which time he has abandoned this scheme in favor of taking notes on philosophy. This notebook materially depicts Coleridge fighting with his own mind, resisting the organic order of thoughts that he would come to accept with some of his later notebooks. Coleridge, it seems, hoped that inscribing order on his notebooks would somehow order his mind as, Lucia Dacome explains, Locke's method had promised to do for so many Georgian readers.[52]

Coleridge's hybrid form of note-taking, while exceptional, is not entirely uncommon in the Romantic period. Many of Coleridge's friends kept commonplace books that bled into adjacent genres of note-taking such as the diary, the friendship album, or the travelogue. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the most famous printed commonplace books of the nineteenth century belonged to Coleridge's friend, Robert Southey.[53] As Daliah Porter explains, these notebooks were a crucial component of Southey's writing process, which manifests formally in the extensive footnotes affixed to his poems. They "abound with excerpts from all manner of writing (travel narrative, natural

[50] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3422; BL Add MS 47523.

[51] He did something similar with his German notebook (BL Add MS 47499). Coburn explains, "The book was very soon divided into sections alphabetically paginated for a vocabulary-book, a system which broke down early because it was too whimsical and insufficiently mechanical for practical dictionary purposes . . ." See Coburn's Introduction to *Collected Notebooks*, 1: xxvi.

[52] Dacome, "Noting the Mind."

[53] *Catalogue of the Principal Books in Circulation at Mudie's Select Library, January, 1865* (London: Mudie's Select Library, 1865).

history, church history, economic treatises, periodical reviews . . ."[54] Southey and Coleridge would publish extracts from their commonplace books under the title *Omniana*. Like the poets, Coleridge's family collected extracts in manuscripts identified on the fly-leaves as "silva 1," "silva 2," and so on.[55] The term "sylva" (Latin for "forest") was a typical metaphor for the commonplace book, along with thesaurus (treasure chest), theatrum (theater), and florilegium (gatherings of flowers). In 1849, when John Taylor Coleridge (Samuel Taylor Coleridge's nephew) decided to return to the practice of commonplacing, he wrote a note to introduce his new collection, admitting that though he might not have as much time to copy extracts as he had when at university, "I still think however much I do, will be for some good to myself—and at least it might be curious to see how my taste has changed since 1814."[56] John Taylor Coleridge's commonplace books reflect his intellectual growth; they are imprints of his maturing mind. The Silva manuscripts and Southey's collection follow a more traditional pattern of commonplace-book compilation than Samuel Taylor Coleridge's do in that they treat entries as discrete units—separable by author or topic and therefore indexable. Still, in keeping with Romantic epistemology, Southey and the Coleridge family structured their collections by personal experience rather than traditional topics.

Similar to his family, Coleridge occasionally returns to earlier notes and records his reactions as a kind of marginalia to his younger self's thoughts. Sometimes he admired his writing, remarking how he might use his notes and extracts for a published work, as he does in Fly-Catcher 22, referring to 2 Corinthians 10:12: "V.12 This verse which tho' not mistranslated has yet not its full <or rather its precise>[57] sense brought out in our estd | Version."[58] At other times, he would dismiss an entire entry: "N.B. Half a page wasted in Nonsense, and a whole page in the confutation of it. But such is the nature of exercise—I walk a mile

[54] Dahlia Porter, "Poetics of the Commonplace: Composing Robert Southey," *The Wordsworth Circle* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 27.

[55] Coleridge Family Papers. Silva Volumes. BL Add MS 86106–86123.

[56] Coleridge Family Papers. Silva Volumes. BL Add MS 86112.

[57] Coburn uses the symbols < and > in Coleridge's notebooks to denote a later insertion.

[58] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 4: 6041; BL Add MS 47536. Notes suggest there is a connection with The Friend, CC I.314.

for health—& then another to return home again."[59] The remark Coleridge dismissed was actually a rather interesting meditation on the nature of handwriting:

> We have traced picture into hieroglyphic and hieroglyphic into arbitrary character—but go further! See the handwriting of men who write much yet not for others, as Scribes, but for themselves & for their own reading—See! How few diversities of character there are, so as often to make it impossible except by the sense to know whether a certain mark be an "e" or an "i"... eleven letters have certainly been expressed by one mark—and see that "ly" at the end of "certainly" in the line above, who could distinguish it, by itself, from an ill-written GG?—So by increase & habit of increased Intellect may not any one thing come to mean all things?—S.T.C[60]

Coleridge is right that his own marking of "ly" in the previous line morphs into a "GG" under his suggestion. Indeed, his writing certainly poses difficulties—Coburn quips in her note to this entry, "The observation on the first half-page, it must be said, is *not* entire nonsense to an editor of Coleridge's own MSS."[61] Throughout the notebooks, Coleridge not only dismisses certain ideas, but suggests that he'd prefer the notebooks burned rather than read by anyone else. In 1810, he writes:

> Mem.—If I should die without having destroyed this and my other Memorandum Books, I trust, that these Hints and first Thoughts, often too cogitabilia rather than actual cogitata a *me*, may not be understood as my fixed opinions—but merely as the suggestions of the disquisition; & acts of obedience to the apostolic command of Try~~ing~~ all things: hold fast that which is good.[62]

Again, the issue of fixity arises. This is not the imprint of a magical camera obscura of the mind; rather, it reflects Coleridge's process, not a finished product. Yet, it is precisely what Coleridge finds embarrassing—so many "hints and first Thoughts"—that fascinates scholars. Let us consider, then, how Coleridge came to learn about the commonplace tradition in the first place.

[59] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 2: 2406; BL Add MS 47518.
[60] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 2: 2408; BL Add MS 47518.
[61] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 2: 2408n.
[62] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3882; BL Add MS 47515.

Liber Aureus: Coleridge, the Student

Through the eighteenth century, students learned to argue from commonplaces. In *Rhetorical Grammar* (1785), John Walker explains,

> . . . [B]ecause all are not born with a like happy genius, and have not the same opportunity to cultivate their minds with learning and knowledge . . . upon these accounts art has prescribed a method to lesson in some measure these difficulties, and help every one to a supply of arguments upon any subject. And this is done by the contrivance of *common places*, which Cicero calls the *seats* or *heads of arguments*, and, by a Greek name, *topics*.[63]

Though rhetoricians continued to advocate for the commonplace method, many were far more interested in how students used their collected quotations as part of original compositions. Scholars positioned the commonplace book as an accomplice to original thought, rather than a substitute. William Milns argued in *The Well-Bred Scholar* (1794) that "[t]he mind is evidently unfit for original composition, till it is stored with words and ideas. But when it has collected a proper supply of both, it should be accustomed to display them to the greatest advantage, and in a variety of forms."[64] Milns encourages students to advance from commonplace book compilation to original composition because a writer's skill emerges in his or her ability to effectively arrange collected material.

Romantic-era education remained deeply influenced by classicism. In the period, classical rhetoric did not disappear; instead, as Walter Ong argues, it was "disrupted, displaced, and rearranged."[65] Many students, including Coleridge, learned to compose essays according to the commonplace method. His teacher at Christ's Hospital, the Reverend James Boyer, taught students to compose essays in the classical manner of "writing themes." An exercise in rhetoric, students

[63] John Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar, or Course of Lessons in Elocution* (London: Printed for the Author, 1785), p. 279.

[64] William Milns, *The Well-Bred Scholar: Or Practical Essays on the Best Methods of Improving the Taste, and Assisting the Exertions of Youth in Their Literary Pursuits* (London: S. Gosnell, 1794), p. 113.

[65] Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 8.

penned essays to prove a truth, known as a "theme." Coleridge and his peers, for example, wrote themes on virtues like temperance,[66] as well as classical authors' maxims such as "*Nec lusisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum*,"[67] extracted from Horace's *Epistles*. This highly structured exercise had long been part of the commonplace tradition and was meant to teach students how to transform collected materials into a sophisticated argument. Joan Marie Lechner points out that in the early modern period, writing themes familiarized students with the commonplace method: it "was to train the boys to utilize proverbs and sententious quotations from the poets as amplifying matter in the development of some commonplace."[68] In other words, the "commonplace" was another word for the theme, not supporting quotations. Students kept so-called commonplace books in order to collect evidence to bolster particular commonplaces—this was the reason why such collections were often organized according to topics or themes. As John Brinsley explained in 1627,

> The principall end of making Theams, I take to be this, to furnish schollers with all store of the choisest matter, that they may thereby learn to understand, speak or write of any ordinary theame, Morall or Politicall, such as usually fall into discourse among men and in practice of life; and especially concerning vertues and vices. So as to worke in themselves a greater love of the vertue and hatred of the vice, and be able with soundnesse of reason to draw others to their opinion.[69]

With themes that arose in general conversation ("Morall" or "Politicall"), these exercises honed writing skills while also establishing a foundation for ethical positions built upon classical writers' authority.

Many of Coleridge's essays are available to us because Coleridge transcribed them into Boyer's *Liber Aureus*—the golden book—which epitomized success for Boyer's students. From 1791 to 1799,

[66] For Coleridge's essay on this theme see *Collected Works*, 11.1: 3–4.

[67] "Nor is it shameful to have once been foolish, but not to cut folly short." *Collected Works*, 11.1: 5 n. 3.

[68] J. M. Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York: Pageant Press, 1974), p. 159.

[69] John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius: Or, The Grammar Schoole* (Liverpool: The University Press, 1917), p. 175.

the *Liber Aureus* expanded to fill three volumes.[70] Leigh Hunt claimed that "to have verses in 'the Book' was the rarest and highest honour conceivable to our imaginations."[71] Though Hunt admits it was an honor he never attained, Charles Lamb copied one of his poems into the album and Coleridge inscribed an impressive total of three poems and seven essays. These essays reveal a classical education, even as they also demonstrate Boyer's distrust of stylistic commonplaces because of their tendency towards ornamentation. Coleridge recounts how his teacher would reprimand him for using stylistic commonplaces rather than plain description: "…I can almost hear him now, exclaiming *'Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, Muse? Your Nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh 'aye! the cloister-pump I suppose!'*"[72] Boyer took issue with unrealistic descriptions: the young Coleridge used neither harp nor lyre to compose his verse ("Pen and ink, boy, you mean!"). Similarly, what was the muse but a specific woman Coleridge admired ("Your Nurse's daughter")? Boyer prohibited certain "introductions, similes, and examples," leading Coleridge to joke about creating an anti-commonplace book—"an index expurgatorius of certain well known and ever returning phrases…"[73] And yet, as Henry Stead explains, despite Boyer's anti-classicist leanings, his pedagogical techniques were not completely divorced from classicism. Stead writes, "In spite of the progressive anti-classicizing forces at work in Boyer's classroom and the Lake School manifesto, classicism of course by no means disappeared. It was so deeply ingrained in the educative and cultural experiences of all those who gained even the most basic of educations."[74] Romanticism could not rid itself of classicism so easily. In fact, Boyer drew an important distinction between stylistic commonplaces (which he disdained), and the rhetorical commonplaces (or themes) that he assigned. This is a crucial distinction that soon eroded as "commonplaces" increasingly referred to hackneyed phrases—the "vacant chaff well meant for grain" that Tennyson refers to in *In Memoriam*.

[70] BL MS Ashley 3506.
[71] Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt* (London: Smith, Elder, 1850), p. 130.
[72] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 10.
[73] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 11.
[74] Henry Stead, *A Cockney Catullus: The Reception of Catullus in Romantic Britain, 1795–1821* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 13.

As Coleridge describes in *Biographia Literaria*, Boyer "would often permit our theme exercises, under some pretext of want of time, to accumulate, till each lad had four or five to be looked over. Then placing the whole number *abreast* on his desk, he would ask the writer, why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis."[75] If the student could not answer Boyer's question satisfactorily, his work would be torn up and the student sent back to rewrite his essay. The point was to assemble appropriate quotations and phrases to support one's specific argument. Unlike Coleridge, Leigh Hunt had little patience for such "absurd" exercises, which he explains with characteristic humor:

> They [the essays] were upon a given subject, generally a moral one; such as ambition, or the love of money: and the regular process in the manufacture was this. You wrote out the subject very fairly at top, *Quid non mortalia, &c.* Or *Crescit amor nummi*. Then the ingenious thing was to repeat this apothegm in as many words and round-about phrases as possible; which took up a good bit of the paper. Then you attempted to give a reason or two, why *amor nummi* was bad; or on what accounts heroes ought to eschew ambition;—after which naturally came a few examples, got out of Plutarch, or the *Selectae e Profanis*; and the happy moralist concluded with signing his name.[76]

Hunt's description conforms to themes' standard structure, as it was formulated in the early modern period: exordium, narration, confirmation, confutation, and conclusion.[77] Romantic teachers would have been familiar with theme exercises as explained in the vernacular by John Walker in his handbook, *The Teacher's Assistant in English Composition: or Easy Rules for Writing Themes and Composing Exercises on Subjects Proper for the Improvement of Youth of Both Sexes at School* (1801):

> A THEME is the proving of some truth. After the Theme or Truth is laid down, the proof consists of the following parts:
>
> 1st, the Proposition, or Narrative; where we shew the meaning of the Theme, by amplifying, paraphrasing, or explaining it more at large.
>
> 2d, The Reason; where we prove the truth of the Theme by some reason or argument.

[75] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 11. [76] Hunt, *Autobiography*, pp. 134–135.
[77] Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplace*, p. 158.

> 3d, The Confirmation; where we shew the unreasonableness of the contrary opinion; or if we cannot do that, we try to bring some other reason in support of the former.
>
> 4th, The Simile; where we bring in something in Nature or Art similar to what is affirmed in our Theme, for illustrating the truth of it.
>
> 5th, The Example; where we bring instances from History to corroborate the truth of our Theme.
>
> 6th, The Testimony, or Quotation; where we bring in proverbial sentences, or passages from good authors, which shew that others think as we do.
>
> 7th, The Conclusion; when we sum up the whole, and shew the practical use of the Theme, by concluding with some pertinent observations.[78]

In Walker's explanation, thematic writing progresses through several kinds of proof—comparing the subject to nature or offering historical stories as evidence. While this strategy goes by the esteemed name *expolitio* in rhetoric, Hunt described it as a senseless heap of "words and round-about phrases."[79] Though each of Walker's steps gestures back to the rhetorical commonplaces as generally applicable formats for argumentation, his 6th step explains the strategy that has become synonymous with commonplacing. Here, he asks students to assemble quotations and appeal to the authority of "good authors."

That Coleridge used *Selectae e Profanis* (as Hunt notes) when composing these essays is evidenced by the quotations he chose to support his argument. John Nabholtz points to Coleridge's theme from November 1788, on childhood education, which begins with an extract from Juvenal's *Satires*.[80] As it turns out, this extract is the same one that appears in *Selectae*.[81] According to Nabholtz, "Coleridge opens his essay with the same quotation from Juvenal, and subsequently paraphrases an excerpt from Quintillian."[82] (See Figure 2.2.) He then

[78] Walker, *The Teacher's Assistant in English Composition*, p. 112.

[79] Hunt, *Autobiography*, p. 134.

[80] John Nabholtz, "Romantic Prose and Classical Rhetoric," in *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature*, edited by Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[81] "*Nil dictu foedum visuque haec limina tangat, Intra quuae puer est*," Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 11.1: 4.

[82] Nabholtz, "Romantic Prose and Classical Rhetoric," p. 78.

Gratum eſt, quòd patriæ civem populoque dediſti,
Si facis ut patriæ ſit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis & bellorum & pacis rebus agendis.
Plurimùm enim intererit quibus artibus & quibus hunc tu
Moribus inſtituas. *Juven. Sat.* xiv. 70.

CAPUT XLI.

Maxima debetur puero reverentia.

Plurima ſunt———famâ digna ſiniſtrâ,
Quæ monſtrant ipſi pueris traduntque parentes.
Sic natura jubet: velociùs & citiùs nos,
Corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domeſtica.
Nil dictu fœdum viſuque hæc limina tangat,
Intra quæ puer eſt———
Maxima debetur puero reverentia. Si quid
Turpe paras, ne tu pueri contemſeris annos:
Sed peccaturo obſiſtat tibi filius infans.
Juven. Sat. xiv.

Utinam liberorum noſtrorum mores non ipſi perderemus. Infantiam ſtatim deliciis ſolvimus. Mollis illa educatio, quam indulgentiam vocamus, nervos omnes & mentis & corporis frangit. Quid non concupiſcet cùm adoleverit, qui in cunis purpureis vagierit? In lecticis creſcunt: ſi terram pedibus attigerint, è manibus utrimque ſuſtinentium pendent. Gaudemus, ſi quid licentiùs dixerint, riſu & oſculo excipimus verba ingenuis indigna. Nec mirum videri debet: nos docuimus, ex nobis audiêrunt. Omne convivium obſcœnis canticis ſtrepit: pudenda ſpectantur. Fit ex his conſuetudo, deinde natura. Diſcunt hæc miſeri, antequam ſciant eſſe vitia. *Quintil. l.* i. *c.* 3.

Adoleſcentium indolem non tam juvant quæ bene dicta ſunt, quàm inficiunt quæ peſſimè; multóque magis ſi plura ſint, quæ deteriora ſunt. *A. Gell. l.* xii. *c.* 2.

FIGURE 2.2 Jean Heuzet, *Selectae e profanis scriptoribus historiae: quibus admista sunt varia honestè vivendi praecepta ex iisdem scriptoribus deprompta* (apud fratres Estienne, 1780). This page contains the quote from Quintilian that Coleridge used to support his theme.

concludes his essay with more contemporary extracts taken from Pope's *Essay on Man* and Addison's *Cato*.[83]

Heuzet organized quotations under *Capita*, or heads. These were general propositions that students would use as themes, such as *Caput XLI*: *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*.[84] Nabholtz explains that most students would have encountered authors like Quintilian for the first time in this "widely used grammar school" anthology.[85] Here, Quintilian explains that adults ruin children's character with an overindulgent upbringing (*Infantiam statim deliciis solvimus mollis illa educatio, quam indulgentiam vocamus, nervos omnes & mentis & corporis frangit).*[86] Quintilian argues that children are impressionable and will grow accustomed to whatever they experience. Coleridge begins his essay with a similar sentiment, "The tender age of Childhood requires the utmost care and attention. Young minds receive strong impressions from every object, [*sic*] that surrounds them."[87] (See Figure 2.2.)

Well into the Victorian period, writing themes remained a common pedagogical tool to measure the highest level of student writing. According to the Education Department's 1872 "Standards of Education," students met the highest rank of composition (level VI) by writing "a short theme or letter…"[88] Most students failed before reaching this point, and, as David Vincent explains, "In the first Revised Code, 'writing' still meant no more than a combination of penmanship and spelling."[89] Because original composition was not the goal, students wrote on erasable slates, recommended by the period's most

[83] *Collected Works*, 11.1: 5. [84] The utmost respect is due to children.

[85] Nabholtz, "Romantic Prose and Classical Rhetoric," p. 67.

[86] "The remedy for these anxieties should be easy enough. If only we did not ourselves damage our children's characters! We ruin their infancy by spoiling them from the start. That soft upbringing which we call indulgence destroys all the sinews of mind and body." Quintilian "The Orator's Education." In *Loeb Classical Library*, translated by D.A. Russell, 127, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

[87] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 11.1: 4.

[88] Great Britain Education Commission, *Elementary Education Acts: Appendix to the Final Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Working of the Elementary Education Acts, England and Wales* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, prtrs, 1888), p. 490. For a critique of writing themes, see Anne Eliza Pendred, *Remarks on Female Education, Adapted Particularly to the Regulation of Schools* (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1823), pp. 291–292.

[89] David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 89.

eminent educators including Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster. An economical tool for honing handwriting and spelling, these slates also conveyed the idea that students' writing was not worth keeping. Just as students practiced writing on slates, they learned to read with the printed anthology. Lest we draw political assumptions about such compilations, Leah Price cautions that the anthology was "[a]t once the voice of authority and a challenge to prevailing models of authorship."[90] Yet, even if politically equivocal, the printed anthology ushered the commonplace book out of the classroom.

Coleridge's classmate, Charles Lamb, spoke out against what he described as the "inhuman" effects of separating literary parts from their wholes in printed anthologies. "The mouths of schoolboys," he writes, are filled with quotations "found in Enfield's *Speaker*, and such kind of books!"[91] Reading pre-made extracts deprives students of the opportunity to explore the text's surrounding context. Here, Lamb refers to the oft-quoted first line of Hamlet's soliloquy in act 3, scene 1:

> I confess myself utterly unable to appreciate that celebrated soliloquy in Hamlet, beginning "To be or not to be," or to tell whether it be good, bad or indifferent, it has been so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanly from its living place and principle of continuity in the play, till it is become to me a perfect dead member.[92]

Lamb compiled his own commonplace books and shared them when friends visited.[93] De Quincey recalls how "Lamb read remarkably well . . . The book from which he read was a folio manuscript in which he had gathered together a number of gems, either his own, or picked up at random from any quarter, no matter how little in the sunshine of the world, that happened to strike his fancy."[94] Keeping one's own

[90] Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 3.

[91] Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," in *Miscellaneous Prose by Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 115.

[92] Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare," p. 115.

[93] Lamb's Commonplace Books are held in the NYPL Berg Collection and the Huntington Library.

[94] Thomas De Quincey, "Recollections of Charles Lamb No. II," in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, ed. William Tait and Christian Isobel Johnstone (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1838), p. 36.

commonplace book is a different thing entirely than reading preselected extracts. For one, it helped readers develop their personal tastes and interests. Second, it required the more advanced skill of reading a work in its entirety. Third, teachers believed that writing out quotations by hand helped students remember what they had learned. *Chambers's* argued as much when it wrote that students should begin to transcribe their own extracts as soon as possible, warning that "the pasting of printed cuttings in a scrap-book or the purchase of a commonplace-book ready-made will not answer the purpose. The extracts must be selected, arranged and copied by the person who it is to turn to profit."[95] The anthology, combined with recitation practices, worked on lower level skills, like comprehension and rote memorization. Selecting quotations, by contrast, encourages students to analyze and evaluate while deciding on the most important section of a text. As another educator, Lucy Soulsby (headmistress of Oxford High School for girls), argued, the extracts "we ourselves collect have a far surpassing value for us."[96] That is to say, collecting extracts is also an act of collaborative self-making.

Like other graduates, Coleridge maintained habits of writing he had learned in school, and in 1797 still followed the commonplace method. It seems probable that he had Heuzet's work in mind when he structured one of his first commonplace books, begun in 1797, with marginal topics and careful citations. Here, Coleridge transcribes quotations, leaving ample space among them. The right-hand margin bears general topics (including agriculture and optimism) as well as citations. Here, we can see a topic (Reformation), the author (Sir T. Browne), reference to the work (*Religio Medici*), followed by a quotation:

> Reformation/Sir T. Brown [sic]/ Relig. Med. Sect. 4.
>
> As there ~~were~~ are many reformers, so likewise there are many reformations; every country proceeding in a particular way & method…[97]

[95] "Commonplace Books," *Chambers*, p. 217.

[96] Lucy Helen Muriel Soulsby, *Stray Thoughts on Reading* (London: Longmans & Co., 1897), p. 76.

[97] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 1: 70; BL MS Egerton 2800 ff. 102–105.

This format demonstrates that as Coleridge began to keep his own reading notes, he followed the commonplace tradition that had been modeled for him in Boyer's classroom. While only several pages remain of this notebook (it has been bound with other loose material in the British Library's Egerton MS 2800), the sheets seem to have been designed for commonplacing, with an ample margin for noting general topics. Because Coleridge added notes to this page five to twelve years after the first notation, we can observe a clash of note-taking strategies. Coleridge's early entries respect the margin; however, at a later date,[98] Coleridge overtook this empty space with his own memoranda, including an imagined experience of inhaling nitrous oxide at the Royal Institution.

> Item. // As I at the Royal Institution was taking the nitrous oxide // about 5 minutes after // Gentleman came from the other side of the Theatre, & said // Was it not ravishingly delightful, Sir? . . .[99]

Coleridge would cross out this entry, perhaps because, as Jackson and de Jackson note, this memorandum "expands and embellishes a memorandum of 1802."[100] Furthermore, there is no evidence that Coleridge ever inhaled nitrous oxide at the Royal Institution, though, as a friend of Humphry Davy's, he would eventually test the substance and record his impressions. Coleridge's later insertions into this early commonplace book (such as this embellished visit to the Royal Institution) visually represent a shift in how he approached his notes. With his marginal anecdotes, Coleridge begins to dismantle traditional commonplace-book form, muddying the space reserved for general topics meant to facilitate rereading. It would become painfully obvious that such an organizational structure did not fit the workings of his mind or his writing habits—empty space on a page seemed to beckon Coleridge to fill it. He would have to find another way to organize his notes.

[98] Jackson and de Jackson suggest an 1802–1809 timeframe. See Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 1: 77n.

[99] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 1: 77; MS Egerton 2800.

[100] Jackson and de Jackson, in Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 1: 77n. See also *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1107.

The Diary and the Romantic Paradox

Diaristic entries encroached upon commonplace-book form in response to a distinctly Romantic episteme that found knowledge by turning inward. Romantics, like Coleridge, rejected the empiricist foundation of passive perception, and shifted their attention to the mind's inner workings. Titles like Taylor and Hessey's *The Literary Diary* (discussed in the previous chapter) demonstrate how commonplacing became more personalized. This resonates with Romantic theorizations of the imagination, which asserted that a writer's internal world always mediated perceptions of the external world. This idea, advanced by Immanuel Kant, amounted to an epistemic upheaval. Christoph Bode explains, "Kant's Copernican Revolution, as explicated in *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), is basically a reversal of the assumption that our knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) has to conform to the objects of our knowledge . . . That objects as we know them follow the structure of our mind, rather than the other way round."[101] Predetermined general topics and commonplace books filled with literary extracts and observations of the natural world fit an empiricist episteme better than it did Kantian Idealism. Thinkers in the tradition of Kant had to allow for what Coleridge called "flux and reflux" of the mind; which is to say that literary extracts could not be disentangled from personal experience. Within commonplace books, this appears formally as dated entries that include both quotations and personal reflections, marking a radical shift away from quotations structured by themes.

Commonplacing by date rather than theme dovetails with Coleridge's version of Romanticism, which prioritizes the author's internal world. And it is this turn away from thematic organization that, according to some twentieth-century critics, set Romanticism against the commonplace tradition. Famously, Walter Ong claimed that commonplacing was antithetical to Romanticism as exemplified by Wordsworth. Ong explains that while the commonplace tradition "standardized opening phrases and concluding cadences," Romantic poets concerned themselves with "private epiphany."[102] Ong contrasts

[101] Bode, "Coleridge and Philosophy," pp. 592–593.

[102] Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 253–254.

Alexander Pope's commonplace (which is also a definition of commonplaces), "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed," with a line from Wordsworth's "Lucy"—"But she is in her grave, and oh, | The difference to me!"[103] Classical commonplaces, modelled from Aristotle's rhetorical syllogism, begin with general experience ("what oft was said") in order to make a specific claim. By contrast, Wordsworthian Romanticism flips the pattern and moves from the specific ("The difference to me!") to the general. Furthermore, Pope's heroic couplets lent themselves to pithy restatements of commonplace thoughts while Wordsworth's free verse, originating in the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,"[104] could not abide inspiration based on a collection of others' words. As Ong points out, there is a paradox at the heart of Wordsworth's relationship to the commonplace, rooted in the term's double meaning. Wordsworth rejected rhetorical commonplaces, but explicitly focused on commonplace experience.[105]

Since Ong, the Wordsworthian imagination has stood in contrast to eighteenth-century texts filled with commonplaces. John Guillory theorizes Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard* as simultaneously consuming and producing commonplaces as it translated classical *topoi* into English verse. As Guillory points out, the *Elegy* began in Gray's commonplace books. Guillory argues that the rich intertextuality of the *Elegy* derives from a compositional culture rooted in commonplace books. The commonplace tradition "functions as the matrix of composition [for *Elegy*], as the base over which the locodescriptive or topographical lyric, the pastoral, the elegiac, are laid in successive veneers."[106] Guillory's analysis demonstrates how the formal qualities of a poem might reflect the specific conditions of its production. The commonplace book tradition remains visible in the *Elegy*'s final form, as it absorbs modern and classical quotations, smoothed out into "a linguistically homogeneous form, the proto-'Standard English.'"[107]

[103] Ong, *The Presence of the Word*, pp. 253–254.

[104] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802*, edited by Fiona Stafford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 111.

[105] See Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 260.

[106] John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 88.

[107] Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, p. 92.

Wordsworth disliked Gray's *Elegy* for precisely this reason and, as Guillory explains, criticized it for its resemblance to schoolboys' commonplace books.[108] Like Ong, Guillory suggests that "the commonplace book had to be discarded as a matrix of composition in order for the Romantic locodescriptive lyric to set itself against the rhetorical commonplace, or to resist the compositional methods of eighteenth-century poetry."[109]

However, much as rhetoric didn't disappear from British education overnight, neither did the commonplace method. And even William Wordsworth—the centerpiece of Ong's and Guillory's arguments—kept collections of extracts. Of course, they differ from Gray's, but diary-like commonplace books featured in life at Dove Cottage.[110] Wordsworth transcribes his friend Thomas Wilkinson's poem on a "female who was reaping alone."[111] When publishing "The Solitary Reaper" Wordsworth adds a note suggesting its connection to this manuscript.[112] The commonplaces, for Wordsworth, were locations and everyday people—both of which feature heavily in the Dove Cottage commonplace books. Coleridge participated in these collections, and gave Dorothy the intimate, "Lines written by Coleridge in bed at Grasmere on Thursday night October 1st or rather on the morning of Friday October 2nd 1801."[113] This poem would appear revised in the *Morning Post,* but not before Coleridge renamed the poem "Ode to Rain" and revised the location.[114] Placing the published poem at Greta Hall rather than Dove Cottage (along with other tonal edits) removes the original poem's desperate intimacy. Instead of fleeing marital troubles, the published version situates Coleridge at home receiving friends. During this period as a Lake poet, geographical place

[108] Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, p. 88. [109] Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, p. 92.

[110] See Mary Moorman. "Wordsworth's Commonplace Book." *Notes and Queries* CCII, (September 1, 1957): 400–405. See also Susan M. Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, rev. ed. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), esp. p. 6 and Tilar J. Mazzeo, *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), esp. p. 64.

[111] Dove Cottage MS 26.37.

[112] Peter J. Manning, *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 243–244.

[113] Dove Cottage MS 26, pp. 33r–34v.

[114] See Heidi Thomson, *Coleridge and the Romantic Newspaper: The "Morning Post" and the Road to "Dejection"* (Berlin: Springer, 2016), p. 211.

was especially important to Coleridge, and he organized notes with attention to location. The next section argues that Coleridge plucked pastoral "extracts" during walks through the Lake District.

The Fell-Walking Pocket-Books: Coleridge, the Poet of Nature

> I have bought a little blank book and a portable ink horn; and as I journey onward, I ever and anon pluck the wild flowers of Poesy
> Letter to Southey 6 July 1794

In 1802, when Coleridge set out to summit Scafell, England's highest peak, he carried what has become known as Notebook 2.[115] At roughly 6.5 × 4 inches, this notebook is small enough to be a (literal) pocket-book. It bears physical marks of its use, with edges rubbed down from travel and penciled entries, sometimes written over with ink. Rather than limiting his extractions to words from books (as he had learned to do while writing themes), Coleridge set out to "pluck the wild flowers of Poesy," as he explained to Southey. Coleridge certainly stocked his fell pocket-books with extracts, but these were taken from nature in the form of impressions, observations, and sketches rather than classical literature. He filled his pocket notebooks with sketches of rocks, hills, trees, and detailed maps to guide his walks. Here, he records observations and thoughts: "Ascend, stooping, & looking at my shadow, stooping down to my shadow, a little shorter than myself—Dial plate Flower, & wild Thyme roam up the Fells in company—with them the Fox's Tail, Fern, Rushes, &c."[116] The cheerful party of flowers and herbs that seem to ascend the hill along with Coleridge are but one example of what Richard Holmes has called "a new form of Romantic nature-writing."[117] These spontaneous musings, pouring forth from a poet-in-nature, represents the kind of verse Wordsworth proposed in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

Indeed, Coleridge's *in situ* note-taking practice enabled his localized meditations that have become synonymous with the Romantic lyric.

[115] BL Add MS 47497. [116] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1216.
[117] Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions*, p. 281.

Moreover, it mirrors parts of M. H. Abram's now canonical description of the "greater romantic lyric"[118] given how Coleridge's notes braid local description and philosophical meditation. The notes Coleridge made during his walks capture immediate impressions: "O what a Lake | I am sitting at the foot almost—for three miles the Screes form its right bank | a facing of naked Rock of enormous height, & two-thirds of its height downward absolutely perpendicular, & slanting off in Screes…"[119] Coleridge captures the massive rocky slopes that had terrified visitors and characterized the sublime.[120] Here, as William Ruddick notes, Coleridge "breaks free from the conventions of picturesque-tourist descriptive writing" as he constructs a panoramic view, rather than a focused landscape with "a foreground, middle and far distance."[121] Looking out on Scafell and Yeabarrow, Coleridge captures himself within the landscape, as he attempts to describe a lake, "inclosed [*sic*] in strait lines, exactly like the Sheet of paper on which I am writing."[122] This is a passage of visual repetition: Coleridge's notebook mirrors the lines of the lake, which "was like a mirror" reflecting the landscape "turned in" to reveal "a whole new-world of Images."[123] Coleridge, the poet, aligns himself with nature's creativity—the paper on which he writes, reflecting the magnificent landscape, as though it were a lake. And, indeed, the descriptions Coleridge penned during his walks resurface in published verse. In his 1802 poem, "The Picture, or the Lover's Resolution," Coleridge draws on the lake-as-mirror motif. "The pool becomes a mirror; and behold | Each wildflower on the marge inverted there…"[124] The fells,

[118] Meyer H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 527–560.

[119] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1213; BL Add MS 47497.

[120] P. Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768–1840* (Basingstoke: Springer, 2012).

[121] William Ruddick, "'As Much Diversity as the Heart That Trembles': Coleridge's Notes on the Lakeland Fells," in *Coleridge's Imagination: Essays in Memory of Pete Laver*, ed. Pete Laver et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 91.

[122] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1213; BL Add MS 47497.

[123] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1213; BL Add MS 47497.

[124] Coleridge, "The Picture, Or the Lover's Resolution," *Collected Works*, 16: 300, lines 100–101.

screes, and lakes serve as Coleridge's creative seat—a place from which he launched verse.

The fell-walking notebooks revise the central concept of the commonplace—the *locus*. Rather than the abstract rhetorical places, Coleridge recorded geographic places. Much like the classical *locus*, Coleridge built a catalogue of imagery he could look to for suggestions while writing. The vales and pikes, fern and fox-tail of the Lake District count as subjects for Coleridge's poetry. In short, Coleridge modified commonplace-book form so that it fit within a Romantic paradigm that located the poet in nature. Where the humanists found authority in classical writers, Coleridge and his circle found wisdom in the "ancient mountain."[125] Moreover, Coleridge used these considerations as material for composing verse. In "Fears in Solitude," he exclaims that he finds "Religious meanings in the forms of nature!"[126] And in "Frost at Midnight," he whispers to his sleeping child of God's "eternal language"[127] residing in the surrounding landscape. Wordsworth, in his poem to Coleridge (*The Prelude*), explicitly sets learning from books against learning from nature and counsels students to find authority in the latter. Here he contrasts "... being vers'd | In living Nature ..." with the mechanical

> ... dangerous craft of picking phrases out
> From languages that want the living voice
> to make of them a nature to the heart,
> To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
> What reason, what simplicity and sense.[128]

The Lake Poets sets up a tension between human-made and natural knowledge. This epistemic rift appears in Coleridge's lake notebooks as he extracts beauties from nature without accompanying literary extracts.

The Lake District's landscape becomes, for Coleridge, a vibrant anthology, filled with imagery, metaphor, and rhythm. He finds so much grandeur that he wonders how he can translate the natural world into language:

[125] Coleridge, "Frost at Midnight," *Collected Works*, 16: 171, line 63.
[126] Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude," *Collected Works*, 16: 175, line 24.
[127] Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude," *Collected Works*, 16: 175, line 65.
[128] William Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), VI, 130–132.

> the winding of a majestic River . . . a large Slice of calm silver—above this a bright ruffledness, or atomic sportiveness—motes in the sun?—Vortices of flies?—how shall I express the Banks waters all fused Silver, that House too its slates rainwet silver in the sun, & its shadows running down in the water like a column.[129]

Entries like this one reveal Coleridge trying out different combinations of words to describe nature's commonplaces—rivers, slated roofs, or the play of light and shadow. He wonders: does the river resemble specks of sunlight or a maelstrom of insects? Consider, too, how Coleridge explores water's silveriness —variously describing it as "a large Slice of calm silver," "all fused silver," and "rainwet silver in the sun." With his questions, Coleridge grasps for more precision and registers an acute awareness of language's figurative possibilities as well as its limitations.

More than describing his natural surroundings, the Lake poet developed a new language that helped him bridge his internal and external world, his thoughts and environment. As James McKusick explains, the poet added "-age" to the end of words, "suggesting that Coleridge was learning to see natural objects in complex aggregations. Thus we find the words *treeage, hillage,* and *cloudage* at various points in these notebooks, generally used of natural objects encountered on his wanderings in the Lake District."[130] These new coinages, which McKusick calls an "ecolect," convey Coleridge's interest in seeing the world as a collection of particulars that join together to form an organic unity. Recording his frustrated attempt to translate geography into words, Coleridge writes to Godwin from Keswick in 1802. He tries to untangle thought and language, and, in doing so, to find more solid grounding for his ideas:

> Is *thinking* impossible without arbitrary signs? &—how far is the word 'arbitrary' a misnomer? Are not words &c parts & germinations of the Plant? And what is the Law of their Growth?—In something of this order I would endeavor to destroy the old antithesis of *Words & Things,* elevating, as it were, words into Things, & living Things too.[131]

[129] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 549; BL Add MS 47501.

[130] James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 44.

[131] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 1: 352.

Coleridge meditates on the relationship among consciousness, language, and nature and thinks about philology in terms of environmental growth. How are words like plants, he wonders, considering how they germinate and grow?[132] Onno Oerlemans uses vegetal language to show how "Coleridge returns us to the continually frustrated desire to root consciousness in the physical."[133] As part of this project, Coleridge wrote the location in which he took his notes on the cover of most fell-walking pocket-books. The notebook Coleridge carried up Scafell, for example, contains the simple title "Lakes" on its cover. Coleridge habitually wrote in his notebooks from either direction, thus one side of Notebook 11 bears the title "Beginning this book—journey from Keswick to Scotland 1803;" once his journey ended, Coleridge flipped the book to record a new adventure on the second cover, writing "…arrived at Malta May 13th—1804."[134] Marking date and location, Coleridge adds elements of the diary and travelogue to the commonplace book. "I write this, the sun with a soft & watery gleam setting behind the hill which I am now to ascend…"[135] and describes the "road serpenting by the side of the Lake," with a poet's facility for transforming things into actions.[136]

Coleridge's interest in what he would later call "Unus Multorum" in his Fly-Catchers of the late 1820s–1830s, manifests itself in his early fell-walking notebooks as an empirical interest in observation. Beyond developing a new language of words, Coleridge punctuates his sentences with small sketches as a way of representing what he saw. In this way, Coleridge's fell-walking notebooks represent an empirical tendency. Placing these small sketches in the middle of sentences, they demonstrate another way that Coleridge pushed against the boundaries of words to represent the majestic fells.

[132] As the last section of this chapter will explore, Coleridge's interest in philology persists and three decades later in *Aids to Reflection* we find him excavating etymological history, which he claims is useful "in disciplining the youthful mind to thoughtful habits." Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 32.

[133] Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 22.

[134] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, I: xxviii; BL Add MS 47508. For other examples of locating the notebook in space, see BL Add MS 47500, 47506, and 47508.

[135] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1207; BL Add MS 47508.

[136] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1213; BL Add MS 47497.

> I am sitting ~~just~~ in the road, with the ivied House beneath me, and right opposite to me, thro' an inverted arch in the Fells, a very singular pike looks in [Coleridge draws the pike's outline] N.B.—One effect of the magnitude of surrounding objects—it gives to shapes a narrowness of width, exceedingly favorable to boldness . . . in a picture you only take a part of the view; but in nature the whole perhaps 20 fold more than you draw, appears to you, each part modified by all the rest—[137]

Coleridge follows his sketch of the "very singular pike" with a reflection on the limits of representation. At the same time, his poetic sensibility peaks through as he attempts to put the grandeur of Scafell into words: "O Scafell, thy enormous Precipices."[138] Coleridge continues to describe the slopes and stones with as much precision as he can muster, admitting, "I am no measurer" as he continues to describe several large stones: "they were vaster than any that I have ever seen, & were each a stone Mountain | they could not be less than 250 yards high | for they reached half way, or more down the vale."[139]

Though lacking in precision, Coleridge writes notes in the tradition of natural philosophers. Indeed, as Josie Dixon explains, Coleridge was a devoted student of the subject, on and off the mountain: "The early Notebooks show Coleridge as a fine naturalist in the empirical tradition of Gilbert White (a copy of whose *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* survives with Coleridge's marginalia)."[140] At the same time, Coleridge keenly felt how his representation fell short of the actual landscape. Not unlike John Locke, Coleridge kept collections of his own perceptions of the natural world. While Locke tabulated weather patterns, Coleridge described the glow of a setting sun. As late as 1820, Coleridge regretted the fact that he had not been as meticulous as Locke and wished he had kept a record of weather patterns. "Monday Night, Jan 1824—a close compact Halo mob-capping the Moon. Ask myself—Does this omen Snow, or change—the day having been so fine & Frost-like tho' not a frost, & remembered I had asked the same last year, & wished, I had kept a weather book."[141] He wrote this in Notebook 20,

[137] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1227; BL Add MS 21243.
[138] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1219; BL Add MS 21243.
[139] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1219; BL Add MS 21243.
[140] Josie Dixon, "The Notebooks," p. 79.
[141] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 4: 5099; BL Add MS 47527.

begun in 1804. Here he records another frustration with the limits of language as he laments, "O that my brain were a Tablet, on which my Soul could record her thoughts…"[142] As such a tool does not exist, Coleridge turns to his memorandum books as a technology that can only capture an approximation of his soul. These notes present Coleridge as a burgeoning idealist, painfully aware of the limits of his own perception.

On his long walks through the Lake District, Coleridge carried a new technology—a notebook designed for writing outdoors. "Prepared with a chemical process," Hall & Co.'s "Velvet Paper Memorandum Books," were designed to protect notes taken with their "metallic pencil."[143] This invention proved especially appealing to those, like Coleridge, who worked outside.[144] Some of Coleridge's notebooks made according to this method bear the following advertisement affixed to the front inside cover:

> AN INVENTION OF PUBLIC UTILITY. | HALL & CO.'S | VELVET WRITING PAPER | AND METALLIC PENCILS.
>
> This Paper is, by a chemical process, prepared to receive Writing with Metal, and which, when written is secure from Erasure. The PENCILS are very permanent, and the POINT will never break.
>
> The above Articles will be found particularly serviceable to Merchants, Brokers, Surveyors, Travellers; Farmers, Graziers, and all Persons who transact Out-door Business, as well as to every Lady or Gentleman using a Pocket or Memorandum Book…[145]

The patent-agent, Thomas Gill, gives us some hint as to how these notebooks were prepared. He reverse-engineered this invention, creating his own version of metallic pencils and velvet paper using "fusible metal" for the pencil and "*prepared harishorn* (being, in fact, the earth of calcined bones, duly levigated)" for the paper.[146] At the time of

[142] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 4: 5787; BL Add MS 47532.

[143] BL Add MS 47500–47505.

[144] When Darwin stepped off the *Beagle*, he was carrying one of Hall & Co.'s notebooks with velvet writing paper and a metallic pencil. Darwin's notebooks are housed by the English Heritage at Down House. The full collection is also available online: <http://darwin-online.org.uk>.

[145] For the full text, see *Collected Notebooks*, 1: xxviii.

[146] Thomas Gill, *The Technical Repository* (Edinburgh: T. Cadell, 1822), p. 351.

writing, he reported to have made "twenty-four pocket common-place books, filled with memorandums made upon velvet-paper thus prepared."[147] Coleridge used Hall & Co.'s notebooks principally during his walks throughout the Lake District. These notebooks came encased in leather, fit with a tongue clasp and a small fold to hold the pencil, making it conveniently self-contained and portable for the purposes listed in Hall & Co.'s advertisement.

Coleridge filled his "Velvet Paper Memorandum Books" with reflections on nature—crucially, made not at his desk, but out on walks among the fells. One of these notebooks bears Coleridge's designation on its red cover: "Arrived at Grasmere ap. 6 1800," a notation he repeats on the top of the first page. Several months later, at the bottom of the same page Coleridge marks his return: "Re-arrived at Grassmere [*sic*] June 29th 1800 on a Sunday with wife and child."[148] Being the only markings in ink, it is probable that they were also the only markings made indoors. Coleridge viewed these notebooks as essential components of nature writing. As he told Southey in a letter written in January of 1804, "my mind has been very active, & I have filled (since I have been at Grasmere) a full Third of that *large* Metallic Pencil Pocket-book with Hints, Thoughts, Facts, Illustrations, &c &c—the greater number relating to my Comforts & Consolations."[149] Coleridge draws a direct connection between his mind's activity and the writing in his notebooks, an idea supported by the name he gave to another notebook, "Mood of my own mind 1804."[150]

Because they were deeply personal, Coleridge's notations countered the growing tourist-book industry. Unlike the insufferable tourists who spend so much time reading about places rather than examining them for themselves, Coleridge charted his own path. Famously, he mocks the "Ladies reading Gilpin's &c while passing by the very places instead of looking at the places,"[151] knowing that his notebook practice reversed the course for him—it forced him to not just look, but to study the views Gilpin recommended. In effect, Coleridge created his

[147] Gill, *The Technical Repository*, p. 352.
[148] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3357; BL Add MS 47502.
[149] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 2: 534.
[150] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: xxiii n; BL Add MS 47517.
[151] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 716; BL Add MS 47502.

own tour book in the form of memoranda. Coleridge pens intermedial notations as he sketches verse, prose, maps, and illustrations of the landscape. For example, he writes, "an eminently beautiful object is Fern,"[152] followed by a sketch of the landscape. Other pages contain prose interspersed with small drawings, as though they were part of the sentence. This was not entirely Coleridge's invention; his pages seem to be in conversation with the industry of Lake District guidebooks that Julia Carlson discusses in *Romantic Marks and Measures*. Carlson explains that maps of the region "developed as a technology of picturesque tourism,"[153] filled with alternating swaths of prose descriptions and verse illustrations. Carlson draws our attention to the innovations of Peter Crosthwaite (1735–1808), who transformed the guidebook and its maps into a "mixed-media publication that featured engraved drawings, prose descriptions, and lines of verse."[154] Similarly, Coleridge describes the landscape in prose-poetry punctuated with small sketches—shapes to remind him of the rocks, hill-scapes, and trees he saw. Where a later generation might pull out a camera to record a vista, he pulled out his notebook and pencil. The images are a part of his sentences, a kind of vocabulary of nature. These are interspersed among traveler's notes. He reminds himself, "When in Miterdale, try by all means to command a view of Ravenglass…"[155] Notebook 2 also includes Coleridge's famous map of the Lake District, marking his path up to Scafell Pike. Coleridge records his trail through the magnificent landscapes of the Lake District: "Quitted My house on Sunday morning, August 1. 1802 over the bridge by the Hops | Skiddaw to my right, upper halves of Borrowdale mountains behind me, Newlands Arch & the 3 M. Within it, to my left…"[156]

Years later, Coleridge would describe the lake commonplace books in *Biographia Literaria* as accompaniments to poetic composition, mediators between perception and imagination. He writes, "With my pencil and memorandum book in my hand, I was *making studies,* as the artists call them, and often moulding my thoughts into verse, with the

[152] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, I: 786; BL Add MS 47502.
[153] Julia S. Carlson, *Romantic Marks and Measures: Wordsworth's Poetry in Fields of Print* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 39.
[154] Carlson, *Romantic Marks and Measures*, p. 39.
[155] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1205; BL Add MS 47497.
[156] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1207; BL Add MS 47497.

objects and imagery immediately before my senses."[157] Coleridge's description of poetic composition hinges on the verb "to mould"—an important term in his lexicon because he saw it as the action of the imagination. Chapter 13 of *Biographia Literaria* describes imagination as an *esemplastic* power—Coleridge invented this word as an English version of the German *Einbildungskraft*, which he misinterpreted as "to shape into one."[158] Meditating on the term, he writes, "How excellently the German Einbildungskraft expresses this prime & loftiest Faculty, the power of coadunation, the faculty that forms the many into one, *in eins Bildung*."[159] This is part of Coleridge's now-canonical theorization of imagination and fancy, the fusive and the "aggregative power."[160] The next section explores how Coleridge developed his concept of the imagination in his commonplace books as he composed *Biographia Literaria*.

Referentiary: Coleridge the Philosopher

To know is in its very essence a verb active.[161]

As Coleridge wrote and published *Biographia Literaria*, he was still struggling to organize his notes according to more conventional commonplace-book form. From roughly 1810 to 1825, his notes contain false starts and self-reflection as he experiments with different organizational structures. Notebook 25 is exemplary in that it contains several organizational schemes. Coleridge used this notebook over a period of fourteen years—Mrs Gilman gives the dates "1805–1815–1817/ & 1819 etc" on the label affixed to the front cover.[162] Used over an extended period, this commonplace book served several functions: it contains the beginnings of a Greek dictionary, notes for lectures, and

[157] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 196.
[158] For more on the etymology of *Einsbildungskraft* see *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4176n. and *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 168n.–170n.
[159] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4176; Add MS 47522.
[160] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 305.
[161] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 264.
[162] During the last eighteen years of his life, Coleridge lived at Highgate with Dr and Mrs Gillman. The latter began organizing Coleridge's notebooks posthumously.

reading notes. Within the notebook, Coleridge writes the title: "Vocabulary | Of Greek Words, radical, or of most frequent Occurrence."[163] He assigns letters to each page, and fills them with Greek vocabulary, sorted alphabetically. However, he has abandoned this scheme by the time he reaches "E." Returning to the title page, Coleridge draws a strike through his "Vocabulary" title and inscribes another title directly below: "Collectanea | Logica, Psychologica, et Metaphysica | Horumque ad | Ethicesn | Relationes."[164] Coleridge pivots from language to philosophy, noting that this "Collectanea" begins where the Greek dictionary ends: "These commence at E. p.38.—But on the blank pages of the abandoned G. Vocabulary are several miscellaneous Remarks not to be included in the Collectanea, and beginning at p. 7."[165] He also inscribes a title on the front cover to reflect the newly miscellaneous contents: "Collectanea | Psychologica, Logica | et | Metaphysica | N.B. Turn the Book upside down."[166] The back cover offers another title, though more difficult to read, it seems to contain the words "Referentiary . . . Logicae . . . metaphysicae . . . Principia."[167] Coburn dates these inscriptions 1809, the time Coleridge began to work on *The Friend.* By 1817, Coleridge has found yet another use for this commonplace book. He inscribes a new title:

> Referentiary
> (From p. 49 (E)—1817, 1 Jan
> To the Book
> &
> Page
> Of the Facts, Thoughts, & Cetera
> That had impressed
> Me for good or evil, during
> My Reading.
> —[168]

[163] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3422; BL Add MS 47523.
[164] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3589; BL Add MS 47523.
[165] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3589; BL Add MS 47523.
[166] *Collected Notebooks* 3: xxvi; BL Add MS 47523.
[167] *Collected Notebooks* 3: xxvi; BL Add MS 47523.
[168] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4327; BL Add MS 47523.

Then, he re-inscribes his resolution in stricter terms—"From Jan. 1817. This Book is devoted exclusively to a Book of Reference for the noticeable Pages of every Book, that I hence forward read."[169] This tangle of purposes shows Coleridge's mind trying to order itself by ordering his notes, at the same time that he explores different epistemic frameworks.

What some have taken to be Coleridge's idiosyncrasy in the form of the commonplace books was possibly his greatest demonstration of faith in a new epistemic model—one that invested in individual cognition, which produces knowledge by actively working through raw material. Initially, as we saw in the notes he kept in the 1790s, Coleridge's commonplace books featured discrete entries; however, just as he understood the goal of knowledge to be an ideal synthesis, over time he allowed the content of his commonplace books to blend together without using general topics or indexes to divide them. Thus, Coleridge's commonplace books increasingly blend disparate entries into ostensible unities. They facilitate a particular type of knowledge that worked through synthesis rather than division through categorization. Consequently, the notebook lays bare a braiding of selves because, just as Coleridge annotated his books, he annotated the memoranda of an earlier self—reflecting on how his thoughts and feelings changed, or, in some cases, hadn't. The notebooks have a recursive feeling in which entries fold back upon themselves.

As Coleridge matured intellectually and personally, the entries in his commonplace books became more complex. Here they are significantly longer and absorb what would have been several discrete entries in notebooks from the 1790s; they are also less straightforward than those in Coleridge's fell-walking notebooks. These later entries (from roughly 1808 to 1819) not only work to synthesize perceptions of the world, but also present the poet-metaphysician working out his theory of the imagination as a synthesizing power. In May 1808, Coleridge constructed the following plan for a table of the mind's faculties:

> Frame a numeration table of the primary faculties of Man, as Reason, *unified per Ideas,* Mater Legum <Arbitrement Legibilitatis mater> Judgement, the discriminative, Fancy, the aggregative, Imagination, the modifying & *fusive,* the Senses & Sensations—and from these the

[169] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4327; BL Add MS 47523.

> different Derivatives of the Agreeable from the Senses, the Beautiful, the Sublime / the Like and the Different—the spontaneous and the receptive—the Free and the Necessary—And whatever calls into consciousness the greatest number of these in due proportion & perfect harmony with each other, is the noblest Poem.—[170]

Reason, Judgment, Fancy, Imagination, and Sensation—the five faculties Coleridge designates as components of the "noblest Poem"—emerge as faculties he regularly exercises in his commonplace books. This entry is surrounded by reflections on religion as he ponders religious oaths; political theory as he discusses the "British Constitution as a mixture of Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy" supplemented by an extract from Blackstone's *Commentary on the Laws of England*; and familial exchanges such as the "universal sneeze" produced by plumes of snuff reported by his then 10-year-old daughter Sarah.[171]

Coleridge's notes record years of thought on the Imagination, which culminates in *Biographia Literaria*:

> The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree,* and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital,* even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.[172]

Thus, Coleridge divides the imagination into the "primary" and "secondary"—the former is active and generative as it engages in the "eternal act of creation," while the secondary imagination differs only in "degree" of agency and power. Fancy, by contrast, is the passive faculty, which does not have the power to create, but joins together that

[170] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3827; BL Add MS 47515.
[171] *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 3830, 3832, 3833, and 3826; BL Add MS 47515.
[172] *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 304.

which is already given. As Coleridge wrote in his commonplace books, the imagination is "fusive," meaning it synthesizes, while fancy is aggregative, meaning it welds together perceptions.

By positing the imagination as an active property, Coleridgean epistemology invests the mind with the power to interact with experience and also to shape it into new forms. Coleridge's theory of the imagination also, apparently, gave him license to work on and modify other authors' texts. Thus, his commonplace books acted as accomplices to the imagination and became *esemplastic* tools in their own right, as he used them to mold raw material (nature/perceptions) into art. Coleridge's commonplace books record the activity of his mind fusing experiences to create knowledge. He models the formal properties of the primary imagination in the very form of his commonplace books, which synthesize disparate experiences into unified wholes. They do this precisely by blending the conceptual fields of author and reader. Invariably Coleridge pulls quoted texts along with original reflections; long stretches of *Biographia* are simply translations of work written by German philosophers including Fichte, Schelling, and Maas.

Many have called these "borrowings" acts of plagiarism.[173] However, because Coleridge was working from his commonplace books and copying out notes he had transcribed at an earlier date, it is quite possible that he did not realize he was copying another author's work. Without clear divisions of entries or general headings—never mind a regular practice of citation—quotations blended with original thoughts, making it difficult for Coleridge to distinguish between the two. His son Hartley makes a similar argument in an 1840 letter. He explains, "... when writing the Biographia, my Father copied not from Schlegel—but from his own memorandum-books—and had literally forgotten what was his own, and what was translation."[174]

In his commonplace books and published works, Coleridge dissolves the boundaries between reader and writer. This is most apparent when he explicitly modifies quotations to bend them to his own argument. Consider the following section from *Biographia*, in which Coleridge

[173] For an excellent history of accusations of plagiarism against Coleridge see Mazzeo, *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period*, esp, ch. 2.

[174] Hartley Coleridge, in Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, 6: 242.

revises Sir John Davies's poem *Nosce Teipsum: of the Soule of Man and the Immortality Thereof*. Here he revises Davies's observations on the soul so that they refer instead to his own idea of the imagination:

> What is poetry? [. . .] He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses,* each into each, by the synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive [*sic*], though gentle and unnoticed, control (*laxis effertur habenis*) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities [. . .] "Doubtless" as Sir John Davies observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately to the poetic IMAGINATION).
>
> Doubtless this could not be but that she turns
> Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange
> As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
> As we our food into our nature change.
>
> From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things
> Which to her proper nature she transforms
> To bear them light on her celestial wings.
>
> Thus doth she, when from individual states
> She doth abstract the universal kinds;
> Which then re-cloathed in divers names and fates
> Steal access through our senses to our minds.
>
> Finally, GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its LIFE, and IMAGINATION the SOUL that is every where, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.[175]

Though this section reads as a cohesive statement, it is in fact composed of several different commonplace-book entries. I have already pointed to examples where Coleridge uses his commonplace books to hone his definition of imagination and fancy, which we can see here, revised into print and applied directly to poetry. Additionally, Coleridge borrows two quotations from his commonplace books. The first originated in

[175] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2: 15–18.

Petrarch's *Epistola Barbato Sulmonensi* ("*laxis effertur habenis*")—a work Coleridge had transcribed in his commonplace book along with reflections on its worth, claiming that it "deserves to be read and translated".[176] The second extraction (Davies's poem) is a peculiar example because Coleridge not only transcribed it into his commonplace book, but also altered it to fit his interest and then recirculated it in revised form in *Biographia*. When we look at Davies's poem within Coleridge's notes, we can see how seamlessly it fits with his meditations. This poem appears, not as an aberration, but rather as a logical continuation of Coleridge's concept of the synthesizing imagination. Following a long meditation on poetry's perfection, which, according to Coleridge, lies "in its power of communicati~~on~~ng ~~of~~ the greatest degree of pleasurable Excitement from each Part that is consistent with the largest possible sum of Pleasure & Satisfaction from the Whole."[177] Coleridge follows this with his revision of Davies's poem, underlining the sections he has changed and explains his revision as follows: "Sir John Davies of the Immort. Of the Soul—the words & lines in the last Stanza ~~inter~~underlined, added by me to apply these verses to the Poetic Genius."[178] Transcribing verse allowed Coleridge to revise the poem, not unlike Anna Jameson's alterations to Wordsworth's "The Happy Warrior." Yet, while Jameson diligently changed a single word in the poem, Coleridge goes further. He yokes general reflections to quotations and subsumes quotations within larger arguments. In the service of knowledge production, Coleridge rarely transcribes without modifying.

The way that Coleridge wove together his original reflections with literary extractions, and even uses his reflections to quite literally modify those extractions, conforms to his conception of organic unity that he explored in his fell-walking notebooks as well as his thoughts on "reflection" as a spiritual practice (discussed in the following section). Coleridge's ability to enter into another author's work and alter its meaning by changing select words is predicated on the special relationship his commonplace books nurtured between published texts and the work of the mind. Coleridge transformed Davies's text into a shared production, which he went on to publish in *Biographia Literaria*,

[176] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4178.
[177] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4112.
[178] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 4112.

demonstrating his perception of reading as an act of composition. What many have dismissed as the scribbling of a weakened author—or, worse, as plagiarism—are marks of a mind working to fuse the conceptual fields of author and reader. Coleridge's commitment to synthesis and unity endured into his later years, and while "imagination" and "fancy" were the keywords of his mid-career writings, "reflection" dominated his later years. In the next section, I consider one more subject-position that informed Coleridge's thought—that of the Christian. For Coleridge, being a Christian entailed continual striving for the ultimate divine truth that exists as one in many—"Unus Multorum," the epigraph Coleridge would inscribe in his final commonplace books.

The Fly-Catchers: Coleridge, the Christian

Faith, Prayer, Meditation
FAITH
as the
Soother of Sickness ~~and~~ <the>
Companion in Solitude;
And the Comforter of the
Helpless[179]—

Coleridge pitched his intellect heavenwards, always aiming beyond the humanly knowable. After all, his definition of the primary Imagination, introduced in *Biographia*, is an aspirational, divine cognitive function. Through his later years, Coleridge continued to modify commonplace-book structure to establish a more flexible space for the dynamic workings of his mind as he composed a series of spiritual exercises in the form of aphorisms that came to be known as *Aids to Reflection*. As I have argued, Coleridge used his commonplace books as a technology for processing poetic and philosophical thought. Moreover, his notebooks were a tool for expanding the reach of his own, human imagination because the way he structured them encouraged his active

[179] Coleridge's title for his final notebook; Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: xlviii n.; BL Add MS 47550.

engagement with ideas, or "the energy of thought," to use Coleridge's phrase.[180] In this final section, I argue that Coleridge's lifelong experiment with note-taking—the various levels of textual absorption of other thinkers' ideas and his hybrid approach to poetry and prose in search of "unus multorum"—are most profoundly settled in the form of the aphorism.

In earlier years, Coleridge critiqued the aphorism as a form that hinders intellectual growth. It had, he argued, a stupefying effect as part of a dumbed-down pedagogy. In the Gutch Commonplace book of the 1790s, Coleridge decried "What Milton calls 'a paroxysm of citations.'—Pampered metaphors & aphorisming Pedantry."[181] In *Biographia*, Coleridge, borrowing from Schelling, criticizes a "certain immethodical aphorisming Eclectics, who, dismissing not only all system, but all logical connection, pick and choose whatever is most plausible and showy."[182] Such superficial extraction instills a lazy kind of thinking in students who learn to "select, whatever words can have some semblance of sense attached to them without the least expenditure of thought, in short whatever may enable men to talk of what they do not understand, with a careful avoidance of every thing that might awaken them to a moment's suspicion of their ignorance."[183] He ends his diatribe by pulling extracts from Bacon's *Novum Organum* (aphorisms 77 and 88, which he had transcribed into Notebook 21).[184] These aphorisms attack a superficial reliance on authority, which offers "obsequiousness and concurrence" rather than "consent" obtained from true reflection. Yet, despite its flaws, the aphorism had significant benefits and had attracted thinkers like Bacon, Erasmus, and Rochefoucauld. These thinkers were drawn to the form because it privileged experiential knowledge.[185] Reflecting on the history of aphorisms, J. S. Mill praises the form because it encourages action by framing truths as necessarily incomplete, inchoate without the reader's

[180] Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, in *Collected Works*, 9: 14–15.

[181] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 102. For a similar sentiment see *Biographia Literaria*, ch. 12, 1: 292 and CM (CC) I.141.

[182] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 292.

[183] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 292.

[184] *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 913; BL Add MS 47518.

[185] For more on the history of the aphorism see Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion*, esp. ch. 2.

sustained engagement.[186] Aphorisms, he claims, are the best form to capture "knowledge acquired by experience of life."[187] For Coleridge, reflection rescued aphorisms from shallow learning. As with any tool, aphorisms are not bad in and of themselves; instead, their value depends upon how readers use them.

The introductory aphorisms of *Aids to Reflection* call the reader into an active engagement with the text. Coleridge notes that the circular logic of established truths sedates the reader, who must see commonplaces anew to engage with them. It is the philosopher's and poet's duty "to produce the strongest impression of novelty" in order to reinvigorate commonplaces that "lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul," indistinguishable from "the most despised and exploded errors."[188] Yet, it is not enough to disorient commonplaces. In the second and third introductory aphorisms, Coleridge offers a distinctly Romantic solution—we must apply commonplaces to our own internal world:

> APHORISM II
>
> There is one sure way of giving freshness and importance to the most *common-place* maxims—that of *reflecting* on them in direct reference to our own state and conduct, to our own past and future being.

There is a difference between knowledge in the abstract and intimate knowledge. The personal thrust of *Aids to Reflection* manifests in how Coleridge uses the first-person plural. Coleridge's "we," while being a common stylistic choice among Romantic essayists, performs several specific functions in *Aids to Reflection*. For example, Aphorism II establishes a familiar voice that invites the reader to join a shared project. After an extract from Jeremy Taylor on original sin, Coleridge begins his comment with, "The first question we should put to ourselves, when we have read a passage that perplexes us in a work of authority, is: What does the Writer *mean* by all this?"[189] Coleridge includes himself within the group of readers struggling to understand religious writings. At the same time, readers recognize themselves in the "we," thus bringing their internal world into

[186] John Stuart Mill, "Aphorisms," in *Dissertations and Discussions Political, Philosophical and Historical* (London: John W. Parker, 1859), pp. 206–210.
[187] Mill, "Aphorisms," p. 206. [188] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 11.
[189] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 266.

conversation with religious doctrine. Coleridge asks readers not to rely on circumstance alone, but rather, to use the mental faculty of reflection to turn commonplaces into a freshly vital kind of knowledge. In the third aphorism, Coleridge reiterates his point, but this time he uses the second person:

> APHORISM III
>
> To restore a common-place truth to its first *uncommon* lustre, you need only *translate* it into action. But to do this, you must have *reflected* on its truth.

Here Coleridge issues a directive and exhorts his readers to enact a distinctly Romantic kind of knowing—one that is not simply a mere copying of commonplaces, but a *translation* of truths.

In directing readers to "translate" commonplaces rather than to simply copy them, Coleridge reflects a fundamental epistemological break in conceptualizations of information storage. Indeed, Aphorism III exemplifies what the media theorist Friedrich Kittler would call the discourse network of 1800. In his seminal work, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Kittler defines "discourse networks" as the technological and institutional conditions that "allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data."[190] He begins this work with a description of Faust's commonplace book.

> Faust, M.A.—indeed, Ph.D. to boot—sits in a library without new acquisitions, reads, makes extracts, and writes commentaries, in order then to dictate to his students in lecture what old books have dictated to him. The Republic of Scholars is endless circulation, a discourse network without producers or consumers, which simply heaves words around.[191]

Before he initiates the "discourse network of 1800," Goethe's Faust reads, "makes extracts" from old books, and then recirculates them through his lectures. A new episteme begins when Faust breaks this cycle: rather than transcribing the words as they appear to him, he *translates* them. Instead of writing "In the beginning was the word"—

[190] Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, p. 369.
[191] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 4.

that legendary first line from the Gospel of John—Faust writes, "In the beginning was the ~~word~~ act." This, according to Kittler, began "an epistemological break,"[192] which gave rise to an entirely new "discourse network." This epistemic fracture modernized commonplace-book form, just as Kittler writes that it had revolutionized literature. In Kittler's words, "The scholarly republican heap of books in Faust's study became a psychedelic drug for everyone"[193] once acts of reading and acts of writing became increasingly intertwined. As this chapter has illustrated, Coleridge consistently dissolves the boundary between reader and writer—indeed, Kittler's description of Faust could apply to Coleridge, for whom books opened worlds of possibilities. To be sure, Coleridge was not contented to simply "heave words around." To borrow Kittler's suggestive phrase, *Aids to Reflection* reveals Bishop Leighton's writings to be "a psychedelic drug."[194]

Though Coleridge originally intended to publish a collection of Bishop Leighton's beauties, his plans changed dramatically as his own reflections overtook the seventeenth-century mystic's. This is, of course, entirely in keeping with Coleridge's central point that active thought must accompany spirituality. In January 1822, Coleridge proposed "The Beauties of Archbishop Leighton selected and methodized" to John Murray, claiming that it "would make not only a useful but an interesting POCKET VOLUME."[195] In this letter, Coleridge fully admits his own objections to "Beauties," which, he believes, are "injurious to the original Author as disorganizing his productions—pulling to pieces the well-wrought *Crown* of his glory to pick out the shining stones—and injurious to the Reader, by indulging the taste for unconnected & for that reason unretained single Thoughts."[196] Yet, Coleridge claims that Leighton's works are already fragmented and diverse, "being a Commentary on St Peter's Epistles, verse by verse, and varying of course, in subject, &c with almost every paragraph."[197] Coleridge's edition would order Leighton's writing not just by "bring[ing] together his finest passages" but also by arranging them "on a principle wholly

[192] Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, p. 10.
[193] Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, p. 116.
[194] Andrew Piper explores how linguistic translation "transfixed" romantics. *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 154.
[195] *Collected Letters*, 5: 200.
[196] *Collected Letters*, 5: 200.
[197] *Collected Letters*, 5: 200.

independent of the accidental place of each in the original Volumes."[198] At first Murray encouraged Coleridge's project, but he ultimately declined to publish it because an edition of Leighton's works was already in print. Coleridge then approached Taylor and Hessey with the same proposal, but this time he had settled on a title and an outline of the work:

> Aids to Reflection: or Beauties and Characteristics of Archbishop Leighton, extracted from his various Writings, and arranged on a principle of connection under the three Heads, of 1. Philosophical and Miscellaneous. 2. Moral and Prudential. 3. Spiritual—with a Life of Leighton & a critique on his writings and opinions—with Notes throughout by the Editor.[199]

This early description fits within the larger tradition of printed commonplace books: Coleridge organizes extracts "under three Heads." In an attempt to render reading useful, he categorizes and organizes extracts. At the same time, Coleridge's method of blending quotations with his original reflections—"with Notes throughout by the Editor"—mirrors his own commonplacing habits.

Indeed, *Aids to Reflection* matured within the commonplace books in a way that I have argued was characteristic of Coleridge's note-taking practices. First, Coleridge's religious reflections appear in his notebooks between diaristic entries. For example, consider a notation from October of 1823, which would become the most celebrated aphorism in *Aids to Reflection* (and, incidentally, J. S. Mill's favorite):[200] Aphorism XXV. In the notebook, Coleridge begins by designating the entry as a "THOUGHT":[201]

> THOUGHT. He who begins with loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his Church (or Sect) better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all three.[202]—

In his commonplace book, this entry appears below Coleridge's description of a "delightful" swim. Flipping the page over, one can

[198] *Collected Letters*, 5: 200. [199] *Collected Letters*, 5: 290.
[200] See *London and Westminster Review* 33 (1840).
[201] Coburn suggests this might be Coleridge's way of flagging an important idea. See *Collected Notebooks*, 4: 5017n.
[202] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 4: 5026; BL Add MS 47527.

read Coleridge's note: "Took a single Pill with my Gruel at 9 o'clock."[203] Such a placement confirms Coleridge's claim that these notes are the products of the "flux and reflux" of his mind. Once printed in *Aids to Reflection*, this aphorism appears slightly revised and surrounded by aphorisms that stress the importance of spiritual doubt. In its printed context, Coleridge detaches this "thought" from his daily life.

But the question arises again: who does the thought belong to anyway? Many of the aphorisms contain original and borrowed thoughts, continuing Coleridge's long, troubled relationship with plagiarism and authorship. Coleridge worried over how to distinguish between his own original ideas and Leighton's; thus, in November of 1823, he wrote to Hessey with a suggested format for *Aids to Reflection*:

> I leave it to your better Judgement; but it strikes me, that by printing the Aphorisms *numerically* with interspace, as I have written them—thus—
>
> Aphorism I.
>
> Then the title or heading of it, if any: and then the passage itself, would be so very much the best way, as to make it worth while—
>
> and instead of the (Leighton, Vol. I. p.—) at the *end,* simply to have an L. either thus
>
> Aphorism V. L.
> or before the first word of the aphorism, on the same line with it.
>
> L. A reflecting mind &c—
> and when it is not Leighton's, to put either E. (Editor's) or nothing.—
>
> In those Aphorisms in which part only is Leighton's, they might be marked L. E.
>
> But I shall call on you, please God, on Tuesday Morning[204]

Coleridge's proposed format offers another example of the thinker's attempt to fit his thoughts into a manageable order. The publishers would proceed with Coleridge's suggestion, making only slight variations. For example, instead of "E" to denote Coleridge's contributions as editor, the first edition would include "Ed." *Aids to Reflection* never contained full citational information, such as the volume and page

[203] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 4: 5027; BL Add MS 47527.
[204] *Collected Letters*, 5: 1356.

numbers that Coleridge had decided against. The first edition, while it made broad attempts to distinguish Coleridge's contributions from Leighton's didn't get granular enough to satisfy our own copyright standards. By the second edition, however, all authorial markers disappeared entirely. Writing in 1830, Coleridge rationalized that he wrote *Aids to Reflection* to express essential truths—regardless of authorship. Besides, he argued, while drafting the work Leighton's ideas had so blended with his own that the archbishop had become an "ingredient." Needless to say, the second edition was a far cry from Coleridge's original vision of a book filled with only Leighton's aphorisms and minimal editorial matter. Coleridge explains:

> For my object, God knows! being to convey what appeared to me truths of infinite concernment, I thought neither of Leighton nor of myself—but simply of *how* it was most likely they should be rendered intelligible and impressive—The consequence of this was, that in so many aphorisms, taken in the main, from Leighton, I had so modified them, that a *contra*-distinction of these from my own was deceptive.—In the preface, I shall state plainly the Leightonian Origin & still remain[ing] *ingrediency*[205]

Once more, Coleridge melded his original thoughts with those of another. The result, in this case, is the aphorism, understood as an open-ended description of a commonly held belief. In the aphorism, Coleridge found a form to fit his unique view of both prayer and philosophy. *Aids to Reflection* marks a crucial point in Coleridge's lifelong struggle to reconcile Kantian philosophy with Christianity. As Douglas Hedley clarifies, in *Aids to Reflection* "Coleridge is pursuing the ancient vision of philosophy as a spiritual exercise . . . the conviction that philosophy itself is . . . aimed at the transformation of the *will* . . . closely aligned to prayer."[206] To do so, he theorizes reflection as the spiritual component of philosophy.[207]

The aphorism, neither complete nor incomplete, works well with reflection. As Bacon's work describes, the aphorism draws the reader in

[205] *Collected Letters*, 6: 1700.

[206] Hedley, *Coleridge, Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 97 and 99.

[207] James Vigus explains that Coleridge "characteristically makes far more explicit assertions of the truth of Christianity than Kant would ever allow, but nevertheless from a Kantian basis." Vigus, "The Philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," p. 534.

to actively produce knowledge.[208] Aphorisms, Bacon explains, "represent . . . a knowledge broken," which invites "men to enquire further."[209] Several pages earlier, Bacon praised "the entry of common-places to be of great use,"[210] demonstrating how aphorisms formed a part of early modern "notebook culture," to borrow Brian Vickers's term.[211] Coleridge understood the connection between commonplacing and aphorisms and elaborates on this relationship in his comment to Aphorism XXV:

> It was customary with religious men in former times, to make a rule of taking every morning some text, or aphorism, for the occasional meditation during the day, and thus to fill up the intervals of their attention to business. I do not point it out for imitation, as knowing too well, how apt these self-imposed rules are to degenerate into superstition or hollowness: or I would have recommended the following as the first exercise.[212]

Coleridge places this practice in the past even as his own note-taking habits—most obviously with his collection of Leighton's aphorisms—reflects the custom in "former times." He further relegates commonplacing to the past when he advises readers *not* to imitate this practice for fear that it would only descend into dogmatism. The problem, as Coleridge argues, is not in the aphorism per se, but rather its application. After all, *Aids to Reflection* endeavors to cultivate spiritual engagement, not blind belief.

Two years after publishing the first edition of *Aids to Reflection*, Coleridge began a new series of notebooks, which he called "Fly-Catchers."

[208] The aphorism's figurative richness has led to widespread scholarly discussion. For Daniel Malachuk, aphorisms emerge as a virtue of republicanism. See Daniel S. Malachuk. "Coleridge's Republicanism and the Aphorism in 'Aids to Reflection.'" *Studies in Romanticism* 39, no. 3 (2000): 417. Anne McCarthy views Coleridge's aphorisms as a form of suspension, a "way of confronting and . . . living through a reality experienced as a crisis of failed expectation." See Anne C. McCarthy, *Awful Parenthesis: Suspension and the Sublime in Romantic and Victorian Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), p. 84.

[209] Francis Bacon. "The Advancement of Learning." In *The Major Works*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 235.

[210] Brian Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[211] Vickers, *Francis Bacon and Renaissance Prose*, p. 120.

[212] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 32.

As a motto, he inscribes "Unus Multorum"—a concept realized in the aphorism form—on all ten volumes. Coleridge not only numbers them, he also notes where they fit in the series. For example, at the top of the title page for his third Fly-Catcher, he has written "From P.52 of No II."[213] He begins each "Fly-Catcher" with similar title pages resembling the one he crafted for the first in the series:

> 5 July 1827
> Grove, Highgate
> Fly Catcher: or
> Day-Book for Stray Nota benes
> No. 1
> Unus Multorum

With his metaphor of fly-catchers, Coleridge combines the two battling allegories of creativity—the spider and the bee; rather than emphasize the spider's act of self-creation, Coleridge's metaphor demonstrates how the spider, like the bee, must find its nourishment from without. Admittedly, the spider's ingenuity both builds the web (the fly-catcher) and determines what is of value. In his interpretation of Coleridge's later notebooks' titles, J. Gerald Janzen draws our attention to the thinker's early reflections on a spider at St Herbert's Island,[214] not far from Greta Hall in Keswick. Janzen notes how "The spider's alternating activity of floating and heaving through the air parallels the movements of the celebrated 'water-insect' in the *Biographia* (I. 124) as an emblem of Coleridge's mind at work in its alternating activities of reception and creation."[215] The "Fly-Catcher's" subtitles suggest that these commonplace books are a staging ground for the intercourse between original and borrowed ideas: "a day-book for impounding stray thoughts" or "Nota Benes."[216] In other words, Coleridge's notes perform the work of both the allegorical spider and the bee: they collect material from

[213] *Collected Notebooks*, 5: xxvii n.; BL Add MS 47530.
[214] *Collected Notebooks*, 1: 1598; BL Add MS 47518.
[215] J. Gerald Janzen, "Notebook 55 as Contemplative Coda to Coleridge's Work and Life," in *Coleridge and Contemplation*, ed. Peter Cheyne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 311.
[216] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: xlv n; BL Add MS 47531.

various places, but they also craft knowledge using the writer's internal resources.

Here, Coleridge transcribes extracts from other works—primarily religious—and transforms them through original reflection. His process, as we have seen throughout, is a hybrid approach of generating writing from within and plucking extracts from without to blend into his own, unique text. Coleridge numbers pages and explicitly connects each new Fly-Catcher with the one that came before it. On the title page of Fly-Catcher IV, Coleridge explains that entries continue from Fly-Catcher III—he also uses a few more metaphors to describe his notes:

> Continued from p. 94 of No III or p. 185 from No I . . . P.I of No IV = p. 186 of the whole, entitled Fly-catchers. These, however, are a continuation of the Fulguratiunculae,[217] or Flashes in Zoonomian | &c— | Monday, 26 Nov 1827[218]

Fly-Catcher IV began with notes on "zoo-magnetism" and dreams, but largely focuses on religious extracts, mainly from the New Testament. Coleridge's Fly-Catchers are roughly chronological, though if one went missing, he would reach for the nearest notebook.

The "Fly-Catchers" are formally similar. Each contains tightly packed pages of inked prose, and many entries begin with a citation (often religious in nature) followed by Coleridge's comments on them. For example, consider his notes on a proverb from the book of Job:

> Job V. v.7. I feel reluctant to disturb a rendering which has passed into a Proverb: but the context clearly compels us—instead of "man is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward" to substitute—Man is born (i.e. made *by nature*) for the trouble (*of Man*) as the Bird of Ravine for the Soar.—i.e. It is as much Man's instinct to annoy his fellow-men as it is the Hawk's, and Eagle's to soar for the purpose of pouncing on its prey.—It is as natural for Man to prey on Man as for the eagle to pounce on the Lamb, the Hare, and the Coney.—[219]

Beginning this entry by citing verse and passage, Coleridge goes on to quote and then comment upon the biblical text. Acknowledging the

[217] In *Collected Works*, 11.2: 1365, Jackson and de Jackson define this term as "lightning flashes."
[218] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: xxviii n; BL Add MS 47531.
[219] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 5: 5807; BL Add MS 47532.

way that religious texts crystalize into proverb, his commentaries, nevertheless, begin to soften the idea that "man is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward" in order to interrogate and, ultimately, revise its assumption. In this case, rather than substitute "Imagination" for "soul" as he had done to Davies's poem discussed earlier, Coleridge alters the preposition, so that the passage reads,"Man is born . . . *for* trouble . . .".[220] Such a substitution displaces agency. In Coleridge's revision, "trouble" shifts from a verb to a noun—it becomes a thing to be born into rather than to create. Here we see Coleridge "translating" ideas by turning to reflection. This passage from Job illustrates how Coleridge's epistemology takes root in commonplace-book form. He begins with a citation and then enlivens this established commonplace by translating it according to his own experience.

Coleridge viewed his commonplace books as epistemic tools, primed not just to collect and process information, but to assist in living—and in composing writings about how to live. As Robert Mitchell argues, Coleridge's later projects (*Aids to Reflection* being the most successful) can be read as his "attempt to create a new 'vital' genre, the life-manual or life-handbook."[221] Viewing Coleridge's work in this way reorients critical platitudes about Coleridge's career. Mitchell recalls scholarship's mourning over Coleridge's lost poetic potential, and though he sympathizes with the desire for a completed *Kubla Khan* or another *Ancient Mariner*, he argues that this focus misunderstands Coleridge's larger aims as a writer. "When we read Coleridge's life in terms of errancy and disorientation, his loss of poetic potency no longer appears as the loss of a potential but rather as a consequence of his active attempt to locate a form of writing that would provide him with orientation."[222] Coleridge's published writings are entwined with his notes, which suggests the depth and complexity of the relationship between living and writing. Of course, Coleridge would be the first to warn us about reading his notes as biography:

> . . . This memento is prefixed, ~~lest~~ in case by accident this or other memorandum books should outlast their owner and fall into the

[220] Emphasis mine.

[221] Robert Mitchell, *Experimental Life: Vitalism in Romantic Science and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 77.

[222] Mitchell, *Experimental Life*, p. 102.

> hands of his survivors, and they should fall into the mistake of supposing that they had found <in them> materials of actual biography & the vie interieure [*sic*] of S. T. Coleridge[223]

This "memento" opens up a paradox. Are we to believe Coleridge's warning that we should not take his notes seriously as hints of the author's interiority? Should we take this note seriously when the note itself warns us not to? There is little that is stable and certain in Coleridge's notes. And rather than take any sentiment as uncontested truth, this chapter has argued that we should take the commonplace books' forms seriously as part of Coleridgean epistemology.

[223] Coleridge, *Collected Notebooks*, 3: 5005; BL Add MS 47527.

3

Laboratory Commonplace Books

> I have felt that through life I have lost many thoughts that were worth preserving, not only for my own amusement, but for the amusement of others. I believe I have often made observations and combinations that were new, at least I never met with them in books, and the present state of society and of knowledge is different from any that ever existed.
>
> Humphry Davy[1]

> The Laboratory notebook, intended to receive the account of the results of experiments, should always be at hand, as should also pen and ink. All the results worthy of record should be entered at the time the experiments are made, whilst the things themselves are under the eye, and can be re-examined if doubt or difficulty arise.
>
> Michael Faraday[2]

In 1834, the "man of science" got a new name. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, declared that "natural philosopher" was "too wide and too lofty a term."[3] Coleridge's comment responded to the widening gap between scientific and artistic epistemes, not to mention the growing specificity of distinct disciplines, each with its own methods and evidentiary standards. William

[1] Sir Humphry Davy, *Notebooks*, Royal Institution, HD/21/D (June 23, 1819).

[2] Michael Faraday, *Chemical Manipulation: Being Instructions to Students in Chemistry, on the Methods of Performing Experiments of Demonstration Or of Research, with Accuracy and Success* (Edinburgh: W. Phillips, George-Yard, Lombard-Street, 1827), p. 539.

[3] William Whewell, "On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences," *The Quarterly Review* 51 (March, June, 1834): 59.

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums.
Jillian M. Hess, Oxford University Press. © Jillian M. Hess 2022. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895318.003.0004

Whewell, the meeting's chair, "proposed that, by analogy with *artist*, they might form *scientist*..."[4] This solution suggests the generative kinship between the artist and scientist in the Romantic period, but it also sets up the two figures as oppositional. From the 1830s onward, the scientist would become a figure of objectivity, while the artist remained comfortable with subjectivity. In the previous chapter, I discussed Coleridge's experiments with adapting commonplace-book form to a romantic epistemology that privileged the writer's internal world. This chapter moves from the metaphysical to the empirical and explores how the commonplace book came to be seen as a vital tool for maintaining objectivity. In consequence, the laboratory commonplace book became a focal point in the pursuit of ever more precision. Two figures in particular—Humphry Davy and Michael Faraday—exemplify the changing conceptions of what it meant to study science in the nineteenth century. Nowhere is this more visible than in their commonplace books. This chapter begins with the imaginative, loose-formed collections of Humphry Davy, and ends with the systematic, empirical notes of Michael Faraday. Just as Davy's and Faraday's professional histories are intertwined, so too are their note-taking practices. Faraday first impressed Davy with a handmade book of notes assembled from the latter's lecture series. Faraday would go on to assist Davy, documenting his mentor's ideas with careful notes. The two natural philosophers are a study in contrasts: while Davy interspersed notes on laboratory experimentation with poetry and sketches of faces, Faraday carefully delineated disciplines and subjects in his commonplace books through indexing and general topics. As this chapter's two epigraphs suggest, Davy's notes remain incomplete, while Faraday's seem to include every minute detail.

As science developed into distinct, rigorous disciplines, systems of note-taking adapted to become more exact. Faraday's invocation to enter notices into the laboratory notebook *in medias res* is a method that strives for the greatest objectivity possible. Relying on memory, Faraday warns, leads to inaccuracies. In short, Davy felt comfortable with subjectivity, but Faraday felt it had no place in the laboratory. Davy's and Faraday's notes are symptomatic of the changing epistemological "virtues" of science. In their history of objectivity, Lorraine

[4] Whewell, "On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences," p. 59.

Daston and Peter Galison demonstrate how objectivity in the sciences developed along with new technologies that enabled an "image-bound scientific objectivity" in the nineteenth century.[5] These new technologies—beginning with early photography, and developing after the 1860s with halftone photolithography, Woodburytype, and Albertype—modulated the experimenter's role in generating knowledge. Daston and Galison offer Faraday's note-taking as an example of the period's commitment to greater objectivity: "... the lab notebook began to be imagined as a repository of raw data, unedited and uninterpreted."[6] This is precisely the advice Faraday offers students in *Chemical Manipulations*: a laboratory notebook "should always be at hand"[7] and observations recorded as soon as possible before memory corrupts the results. Note, too, how Faraday slips into the passive voice, now a hallmark of scientific writing. By contrast, Davy's notes (and verse) tend to position the author as subject. Romantic and Victorian thinkers both valued the commonplace book's newer diaristic form, but for incongruous reasons. While dated entries marked a developing internal world for many Romantics, Victorian scientists like Faraday viewed "real-time" entries as marks of objectivity.

Modern science grew out of Baconian empiricism, which was itself dependent upon the commonplace tradition. Because natural philosophers accumulated particular observations, they needed a reliable tool to organize and store information. In *The Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon recommends the commonplace book: "there scarcely can be a thing more usefull even to ancient, and popular sciences, than a solid, and good aide to memory; that is, a substantiall and learned digest of common places."[8] Bacon's followers, the "English Virtuosi" that Richard Yeo discusses, "made note-taking and information management a crucial part of modern scientific ethos."[9] Baconian empiricism grew increasingly central to scientific studies, so that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dalia Porter explains, "it had

[5] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), p. 124.
[6] Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, p. 243.
[7] Faraday, *Chemical Manipulation*, p. 539.
[8] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), p. 162.
[9] Yeo, *Notebooks*, p. xxiii.

become commonplace to associate Baconian induction with the rise of modern science."[10] Natural philosophers gravitated to the commonplace book as a way to organize their observations on the "book of nature."[11]

Commonplace books had proven an essential tool for experimental philosophy—but what were its commonplaces? It is important to remember that literary quotation was only one form of Aristotle's *topoi* and Cicero's *loci*. As Ann Moss summarizes Aristotle's explanation, *topoi* had several uses: "the universally applicable procedures of dialectical reasoning; the subject-specific heads apparently more useful for rhetoric; and propositions which form the premises of different areas of philosophical and scientific enquiry."[12] In this respect, the ancient commonplace method structured scientific inquiry by organizing accepted truths. This continued to be the case, as Adrian Johns makes clear, through the founding of the Royal Society in 1660: "Like commonplaces, facts, were to be epistemic foundation stones—tools for building a conversation rather than objects over which to dispute."[13] Chemical properties, mathematical equations, and geometric theorems served as general topics in printed commonplace books designed for scientific fields.

Often, scientific commonplaces took the form of charts and graphs. For example, in 1825 Olinthus Gregory LL.D. published *Mathematics for Practical Men Being a Common-Place Book of Principles, Theorems, Rules, and Tables, in Various Departments of Pure and Mixed Mathematics*..., and claimed that his collection of mathematical truths would be of use to "Surveyors, Architects, Mechanics, and Civil Engineers."[14] Similarly, in 1839, William Templeton published *An Engineer's Common-Place Book of Practical Reference, consisting of*

[10] Dahlia Porter, *Science, Form, and the Problem of Induction in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 37.

[11] Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001), p. 41.

[12] Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 5.

[13] Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 60.

[14] Olinthus Gregory, *Mathematics for Practical Men: Being a Common-Place Book of Principles, Theorems, Rules, and Tables*... (London: Baldwin, Cradock, & Joy, 1825), title page.

Practical Rules and Tables adapted to Land, Marine, and Locomotive Steam-Engines. An engineer might turn to this commonplace book as a storehouse of "square and cube roots of numbers" or "areas and circumferences of circles."[15] With indisputable facts, these storehouses provided a foundation for further investigation. To borrow Cicero's term, they were the "*sedes*," seats, from which to launch scientific exploration. As experimental science's reach expanded, the question of what counted as evidence became central. On this count, Davy and Faraday took different positions: while Davy intertwined his mental processes with experimentation, Faraday used his notes to isolate phenomena as much as possible from his own observing mind.

Davy and Faraday's collaborative relationship is embalmed in their notebooks from the beginning of Faraday's career to the end of Davy's. Faraday took on the role of Davy's amanuensis and sometime-archivist: he transcribed Davy's messy notes and saved scribbles that Davy would otherwise throw away.[16] Before turning to a closer study of both men, consider the following notes on Davy's safety lamp (a life-saving invention created for use in flammable environments such as coal mines), from the only surviving notebook devoted to the topic, the rest having been destroyed. Davy's notations appear in Figure 3.1, followed by Faraday's copy in Figure 3.2.

Both Davy's scribblings and Faraday's artistically rendered page present the same information, but Faraday has rearranged the format of the page to place both figures side by side, breaking the text into two paragraphs to explain each of the lamps. Faraday's training as a book-binder's apprentice comes through in his precise, ruler-lined sketch that reveals an understanding of three-dimensional drawing. Each man's notes live up to the stereotype of his age. Davy, the Romantic experimenter-cum-poet, transcribed his thoughts as they occurred with little regard for organization, while Faraday, the Victorian, was a master of order and organization. For Davy, the page was simply a tool for working through ideas; Faraday, however, saw notes as heirlooms, to be

[15] William Templeton, *The Engineer's Common-Place Book of Practical References, Etc.* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1839), title page.

[16] Davy's notebooks are notoriously difficult to decipher. As yet, there is no complete edition of his notes; however, a digital transcription project is underway directed by Sharon Ruston. See <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project>.

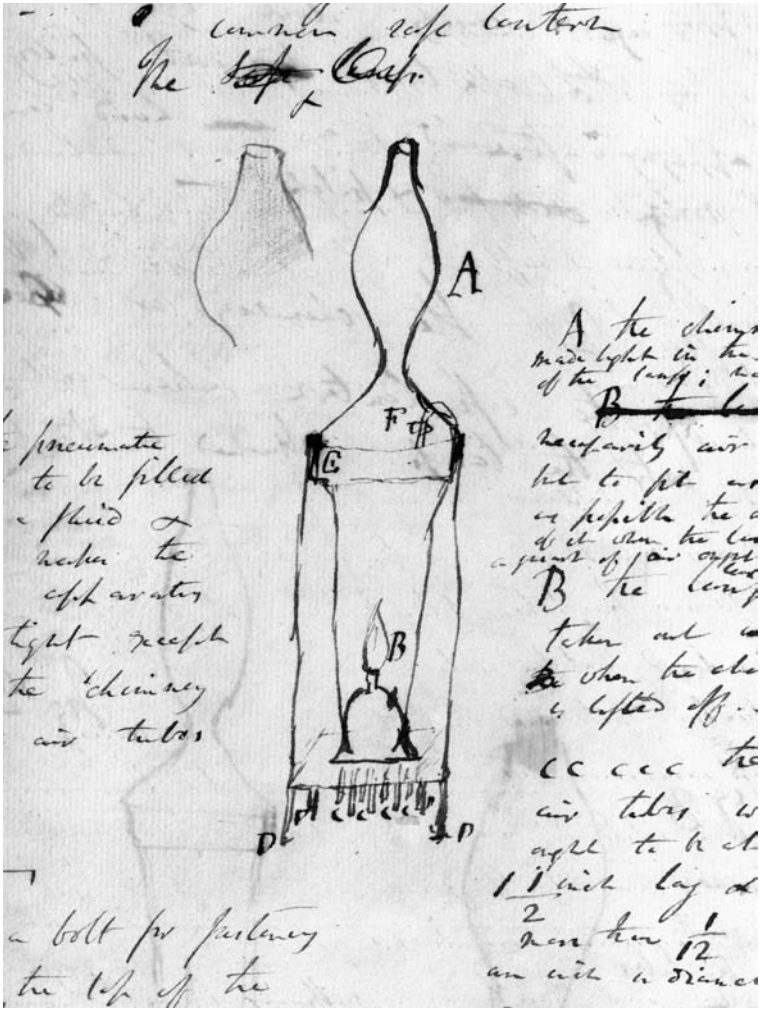


FIGURE 3.1 Humphry Davy's Notes on the Safety Lamp, Royal Institution MS/HD/11, Science Source.

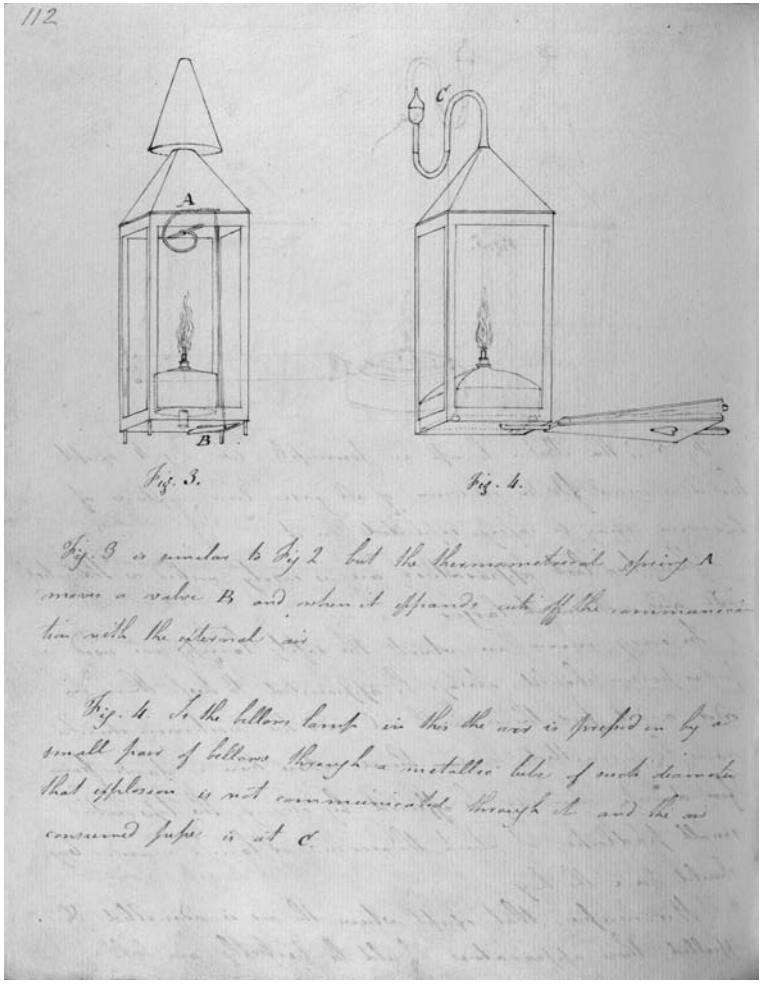

112
A
B
C
Fig. 3.
Fig. 4.
Fig. 3 is similar to Fig 2 but the thermometrical spring A moves a valve B and when it expands cuts off the communication with the external air
Fig. 4 is the bellows lamp in this the air is supplied by a small pair of bellows through a metallic tube of such diameter that explosion is not communicated through it and the air consumed passes at C

FIGURE 3.2 Michael Faraday's Notes on the Safety Lamp, Royal Institution MS/HD/11, Science Source.

preserved for posterity. In fact, the only reason this particular notebook still exists is because Faraday "begged" Davy to allow him to keep it. After Davy's death, Faraday would donate this manuscript (along with another one of Davy's) to the Royal Institution. Faraday explains as much in an introductory note to this collection:

> This volume and a similar one foolscap size[17] contain certain original papers of Sir H. Davy. It was part of my duty to copy the papers after he had written them varybly [*sic*]. Sir H. Davy frequently wrote over there and then I had to copy again until a fair paper was produced which went to the Society or the printer. The originals used to be torn up or destroyed until I begged I might be allowed to keep them for myself and here they are.
>
> M Faraday
>
> Jan 1832[18]

That Faraday thought to write such a note demonstrates two things. First, that he cared about retaining histories of invention, and second, that he valued note-taking as inimitable documentation of that history. With this note, Faraday positions Davy's notebooks as artifacts: not only did he help preserve Davy's notes, he also recorded how they came to be archived in the first place. Note, too, how Faraday uses the language of a bookbinder (foolscap) to explain his role of imposing order on Davy's inconsistent notes (written "varybly"). In December of 1829 (the year Davy died), the extensive *Minutes of the Meeting of the Managers of the Royal Institution of Great Britain* record how Faraday presented his mentor's notes to the society, which then took pains to keep them safe in the Library of Reference. This note was entered alongside the heading "Notebooks of Sir. H Davy."[19] With general topics written in the margin, the Royal Institution (like the Royal Society) turned to the commonplace method to order their troves of knowledge.

[17] Faraday refers to what is now Royal Institution MS/HD/10.
[18] Royal Institution MS/HD/11.
[19] Royal Institution of Great Britain, *Minutes of the Managers' Meetings 1799–1900* (London: The Scholar Press, 1973), 7: 286–289.

"Nothing Exists but Thoughts": Davy's Laboratory Notes

On Boxing Day of 1799, Humphry Davy, was "almost completely intoxicated"[20] after breathing nitrous oxide. As was his practice, Davy recorded his initial impressions in his commonplace book.

> The sensations were superior to any I ever experienced . . . Theories passed rapidly thro [*sic*] the mind, believed I may say intensely, at the same time that every thing going on in the room was perceived. I seemed to be a sublime being, newly created and superior to other mortals, I was indignant at what they said of me and stalked majestically out of the laboratory to inform Dr. Kinglake privately that nothing existed but thoughts.[21]

Davy would go on to recount this experience in his published work, *Researches*, where he describes the nocturnal activities that led to this notebook entry. "At night I found myself unusually cheerful and active; and the hours between eleven and two, were spent in copying the foregoing detail from the common-place book and in arranging the experiments."[22] Davy describes his commonplace book as a space for immediate, raw perceptions, before he revised them into publishable form. While we have seen how Coleridge used his notebooks to modify others' verses, Davy modified his own mind and recorded the results in his notebooks.

Davy's experiments with nitrous oxide altered the course of his career for two reasons. For one, his findings catapulted him to fame as a leading chemist. Second, these experiments upended Davy's materialist epistemic framework. In 1795, Davy wrote "The origin of all our ideas is sensation"[23]—he believed that thoughts came from matter in the air.[24] These materialist views were reinforced by Thomas Beddoes,

[20] Davy, Royal Institution MS/HD/20(b), p. 129.
[21] Davy, Royal Institution MS/HD/20 (b), pp. 129–134.
[22] Sir Humphry Davy, *Researches, Chemical and Philosophical: Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide, Or Dephlogisticated Nitrous Air, and Its Respiration* (London: J. Johnson, 1800), p. 490.
[23] Davy, *Notebooks*, Royal Institution HD/13F.
[24] Jan Golinski, *The Experimental Self: Humphry Davy and the Making of a Man of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p. 31.

who hired a young Davy to work at the Pneumatic Institute in Bristol. Another leader of the Institute, Joseph Priestley, argued that air could be good or bad, and, therefore, profoundly influenced moral behavior. However, after breathing nitrous oxide, Humphry Davy denounced materialism: "*Nothing exists but thoughts!*"[25] If this claim proved true, it was of the utmost importance for Davy to record his thoughts as quickly as possible. These experiments, along with Coleridge's influence, ultimately persuaded him of the overwhelming power of perception in creating knowledge and led him to embrace Kantian idealism. This conversion plays out in his notebooks as Jan Golinski points out: "Davy was soon vigorously crossing out the passages in his notebook that had lent support to the materialist view."[26] Like Coleridge, Davy understood his notebooks as epistemic spaces, vital components of knowledge-development. And (like Coleridge), we see a braiding of selves as an older Davy rejects a younger Davy's beliefs.

The notes Davy wrote during his experiments with nitrous oxide blend two unlikely epistemic bedfellows: empirical detail of symptoms and a Romantic exploration of the writer's internal world. Davy's self-experimentation resulted in several poems including two, scrawled on a recto facing the underlined title "On breathing the Nitrous Oxide" on the verso. Scholars have noted that, though poor examples of Davy's verse, they provide "interesting empirical evidence of his mental state."[27] In fact, he uses poetry to catalogue his internal experience, describing the effects of the gas on both his body and his mind. Paradoxically, Davy's verse registers the chemist's subjective perception of empirical detail. Nitrous oxide has a liberating effect, waking the subject from a dreamy existence. The first poem moves from abstract sentiments of benevolence to a more specific dream of family life. Davy reflects on how he has been living—in a sleepy reverence of the "dry + unmeaning word benevolence." From here, the poem pivots on the word "no," as he rejects this life in favor of one as a father and husband. This is a rare admission as the only page on which Davy pauses to

[25] Davy, *Researches, Chemical and Philosophical*, p. 489; emphasis in original.
[26] Golinski, *The Experimental Self*, p. 31.
[27] Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009), p. 260. See also Sharon Ruston, "When Respiring Gas Inspired Poetry," *The Lancet* 381, no. 9864 (February 2, 2013): 366–367.

consider family life.[28] Maurice Hindle suggests that the poem begins with Anna Beddoes, Davy's love interest at the time.[29] It also seems plausible that the first seven lines refer to "the late-Enlightenment project of universal benevolence."[30]

Shall I renounce the countenance
Living in the beauty of expression
Shall I give up the articulately
Sounding voice whose gentle sound
Has so often lulled me to
Repose to worship the dry
+ unmeaning word benevolence
no let me live a son, a
brother + a lover, let
me die a ~~father~~ a
husband, a friend +
a father.[31]

While this poem documents how nitrous oxide transformed Davy's emotional state, the second poem, which follows without a line break on the same page, records how the substance physically affected him. This poem roots itself in the body's materiality.

On Breathing the Nitrous Oxide
Not in the ideal dreams of wild
desire
Have I beheld a rapture wakening
form
My bosom burns with no unhallowed
fire
Yet is my cheek with rosy
blushes warm
Yet are my eyes with sparkling
lustre filled
Yet is my ~~murmuring~~ mouth

[28] Maurice Hindle, "Nature, Power, and the Light of Suns: The Poetry of Humphry Davy," *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* New Series 157 (Spring 2013): 17.
[29] She was also unattainable because she was married to Davy's employer.
[30] Hindle, "Nature, Power, and the Light of Suns," p. 13.
[31] Davy, Royal Institution MS/HD/13(c), p. 5.

replete with ~~dying~~[32] murmuring sound
Yet are my limbs with inward
transport thrill'd
And clad with new-born
mightiness around[33]

Beginning in the negative, the first two lines suggest Davy's struggle to fully account for the effects of nitrous oxide. As Sharon Ruston explains, this poem "maps very easily onto Davy's other recorded accounts of the experience of inhaling nitrous oxide"[34] in his notes and published works. As a catalogue of symptoms, this poem is a strange revision of the blazon—a poetic device used by early modern poets that catalogued the attributes of a subject, often a lover. Rather than detailing attributes he observes from the outside, he details his own inner state, listing his own embodied experience of nitrous oxide, from his bosom, to his face, to his limbs. After the first two lines, the poem is insistently present tense, which reinforces the immediacy of Davy's inscription. Nitrous oxide was potent (as the rest of the world would soon learn): he blushes, he murmurs, and he feels a revitalized passion within his breast. Davy's poem presents an acute awareness of his chaotic embodied state: he presents his body as if it were unhinged, describing body parts separately, strung together by the repetition of "yet," which suggests the improbability of this experience. The cross-outs at the bottom of the page and uneven line-breaks indicates that Davy composed the poem as he wrote.[35]

In his notes, Davy's moods shift as rapidly as his handwriting, which presents an unstable identity. This makes sense considering how this experiment "question[ed] the subjects' notions of their own identity" as Jan Golinski argues. "When they lost control of their bodily actions, they relinquished the autonomy and self-presence normally expected of the Lockean subject of empirical knowledge."[36] What was identity if it proved so easily changeable? This might also explain what has become the most famous page in all of Davy's notebooks; it is here that Davy

[32] Davy inserted and then crossed out an illegible word here.
[33] Davy, Royal Institution MS/HD/13(c), pp. 5–6.
[34] Sharon Ruston, "When Respiring Gas Inspired Poetry," *The Lancet* 381, no. 9864 (February 2, 2013): 367.
[35] For a description of the events surrounding this poem see John Davy, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Humphry Davy* (London, 1836), 1: 97.
[36] Golinski, *The Experimental Self*, p. 19.

stakes his place in history alongside Newton. The first half of the page, written in Davy's typical hand, records experimental observations on chemical reactions to heat, "Whenever bodies are heated to a certain degree they are almost universally luminous."[37] This entry gives way to a striking change in handwriting as the intoxicated chemist links his name with Newton's: "Davy & Newton." Now erratic and enlarged, Davy's handwriting matches the hubris of such a statement. He imagines himself a great reformer of science, akin to Newton who had completely changed the world-view of his time. Whether Davy actually believed such a brazen comparison remains debatable, but it does demonstrate how nitrous oxide imbued him with manic energy. The next sentence seems to offer an explanation, that "Davy & Newton" exemplifies "The feeling produced by breathing about 7 quarts of Nitrous phosoxy."[38] This page visually reflects the enormous influence of Davy's newfound drug. Davy's mind was his laboratory, and as the experiment played out through his thoughts, Davy needed a technology to capture the impressions racing through his mind.

The commonplace books preserve the immediacy of Davy's experiments, and, in doing so, illustrate how they functioned as a paper extension of the laboratory—so much so that this particular manuscript contains a burn that mars over a dozen pages that, fittingly, contain observations on ammonia.[39] The notebooks' disorderly nature leads Lamont-Brown to conclude that they must have been strewn throughout the laboratory.[40] Discordant entries clash on the page, reflecting Davy's allegiance to competing epistemic frameworks. On the one hand, Davy asserted that discovery depended upon imagination. In a lecture, he argued: "Imagination, as well as reason, is necessary to perfection in the philosophical mind. A rapidity of combination, a power of perceiving analogies, and of comparing them by facts, is the creative source of discovery."[41] On the other hand, he distrusted hypotheses until they had been supported with ample facts drawn from rigorous experimentation. In a notebook of 1799, he writes:

[37] Royal Institution HD/20/b, p. 187.
[38] Royal Institution HD/20/b, p. 182.
[39] Royal Institution HD/20/b, pp. 31–44.
[40] Raymond Lamont-Brown, *Humphry Davy: Life Beyond the Lamp* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2004).
[41] Sir Humphry Davy, "Lecture II," in *The Collected Works*, vol. 4 (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1839), p. 308.

"I began the pursuit of chemistry by speculations and theories: more mature reflection convinced me of my errors, and of the limitation of our powers,—the dangers of false generalization, and the difficulty of forming true ones."[42] Yet, the nature of Davy's experiments made it impossible for him to achieve any semblance of objectivity. Tim Fulford explains how the chemist's self-experimentation opened him up to criticism, especially from "conservative cultural commentators . . . who increasingly desired science to confine itself to de-subjectivized, factual report of experiments that registered nature independently of the hand—and mind—of the experimentalist."[43] Davy's notes reflect his mind as much (if not more than) his experiments. Cacophonous pages like this one convey knowledge formation as a process that depends upon collecting facts as they appear to the experimenter's mind. Davy never gives the impression that he records things as they objectively are, but rather as they appear to him, filtered through his own observations and reflections.

The only organizational structure that Davy sometimes used is writing dates in ink on the spine or front cover. In general, though, it is difficult to date entries. He fills his notebooks with doodles and sketches—often faces—the desideratum of Davy's thinking mind. Some inside covers bear such sketches alongside mathematical equations, suggesting their affinity as processes of thinking. Davy relied on narrative to record his experiments, with some space devoted to simple mathematical equations. June Fullmer explains that Davy filled these notebooks with "laboratory data, notes he took while reading scientific and other literature, drafts of letters and of scientific papers, arithmetic calculations, quickening of poetic inspirations, sketches, compulsive doodles, and social calendars . . . . If the entries now appear chaotic or fragmentary, Davy should scarcely be faulted; it was not his aim to be either tidy or orderly, since what he wrote or drew was intended for no eyes but his."[44] Unlike Faraday, Davy did not write out fair copies of the notes he entered in his commonplace books. Rather, he moved straight to drafting prose

[42] Sir Humphry Davy, "Memoirs of the Life of Sir Humphry Davy," in *The Collected Works*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1839), p. 54.

[43] Tim Fulford, "Science and Poetry in 1790s Somerset: The Self-Experiment Narrative, the Aeriform Effusion, and the Greater Romantic Lyric," *ELH* 85, no. 1 (2018): 109.

[44] June Z. Fullmer, *Young Humphry Davy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2000), pp. 172–173.

meant for publication. This is not to say that Davy had no standards for evaluating information. Within his notes, he constantly reminds himself not to rely on generalizations alone: "This investigation will consist of likely more than a series of facts or observations [*sic*] . . . Whenever I have advanced opinion only probable, I have . . . rejected them from the other parts & given to them the name of speculations." Having established the importance of working from observations, Davy writes out calculations of nitrogen and oxygen, followed by speculations on reactions among elements: "It is evident that if water be decompressed its hydrogene [*sic*] will demand 6 of Nitrogene [*sic*] to form Amonia." Davy continues to record calculations written out in prose: "Now how much water will 100 grams of Nitrous gas decompsed [*sic*]."[45] Tedious though experimentation might be, it produced facts, which, Davy argued, were the foundation of true knowledge.

Though Davy's entries in his notebooks seem impulsive and disorganized, there are hints throughout that he viewed his notebooks as organizational tools. In a notebook dated 1800, Davy attempted to organize his time into a structured schedule: composing poetry in the morning and studying the nature of the universe at night, with midday reserved for experiments.

> Resolution
>
> To work two hours with pen before breakfast on the Lover of Nature or the feelings of Eldon—from six till eight
>
> _____
>
> From nine till two in expts. [experiments]
>
> _____
>
> From four to six reading
>
> Seven till ten. Metaphysical systems[46]

Such a well-planned day recalls Coleridge's designs for his notebooks, and suggests that Davy, for all his disorganization, yearned for structure and order. In the years before Faraday began working at the Royal Institution, William Payne was responsible for the laboratory's upkeep. It seems, however, that Payne did not live up to Davy's standards. On September

[45] Royal Institution HD/20/b, p. 94.
[46] Royal Institution HD/13/D, p. 24; See Fullmer, *Young Humphry Davy*, pp. 168–169.

13, 1809, Davy was appalled by the state of his laboratory. He penned instructions with an aggression that belies his frustration:

> Objects much wanted in the Laboratory of the Royal Institution
>
> Cleanliness
>
> Neatness
>
> &
>
> Regularity—
>
> —The laboratory must be cleaned every morning when operations are going on before ten o Clock [*sic*].—It is the business of W. Payne to do this . . .
>
> —There must be in the laboratory pen, ink, paper and wafers, and these must not be kept in the slovenly manner in which they are usually kept. I am now writing with a pen and ink such as was never used in any other place.
>
> The laboratory is constantly in a state of dirt and confusion.[47]

A large ink blot stains the page, testimony to Davy's claim that he found this pen wanting. The three virtues Davy claimed he needed for his laboratory perfectly fit Michael Faraday, as we will see. They did not, to Davy's mind, fit Payne, who in 1813 was again accused of negligence and officially sacked. Within a month, Davy recommended Faraday for the job. The Minutes record Davy's impressions of Faraday: "His habits seem good, his disposition active and cheerful and his manner intelligent."[48] Faraday was, in short, the opposite of Payne. His remarkable notes on Davy's lecture proved as much. Almost as soon as Faraday joined the Royal Institution, Davy whisked him away on a tour of the Continent. He was to be Davy's "philosophical assistant"—though, much to Faraday's chagrin, on this particular trip he also served as valet after Davy's suddenly quit. Nevertheless, the continental trip would be especially important for Faraday, just beginning his meteoric rise as a man of science. Both men brought their notebooks on the trip. Davy's bears the embossed label "Common Place Book" on its spine.[49]

[47] Lamont-Brown, *Beyond the Lamp*, p. 81.

[48] Royal Institution, *Minutes of the Managers' Meetings 1799–1900* (London: The Scolar Press, 1973), March 1, 1813.

[49] Royal Institution MS HD/12.

By this point in his career, Davy had moved away from self-experimentation in favor of less subjective methods of inquiry, and he became increasingly interested in archeology and geology. For example, while in Rome, he scraped material from the walls of Nero's bath. Notice how, in this note, Davy's voice is more passive and he is no longer the dominant subject.

> Dec 2nd 1814 Rome
>
> A Red colour scraped from a piece of the wall of the Bath of Nero was not altered by nitric or muriatic it contained combustible matter and when burnt gave off sulpherous gas . . . The red paint became brown when heated but recovered its colour by cooling + this happens after being heated to a strong redness . . . [50]

With the brazenness of a nineteenth-century explorer, Davy takes a piece of the Roman ruins for experimentation. This entry merges several note-taking genres—the diary, travelogue, and experiment notebook—and exemplifies how Davy could never isolate various uses for his collection. Subsequent pages contain illustrations of mythical animals, such as a creature with a ram's head and human body surrounded by birds. Several pages later, he recalls his experiment with nitrous oxide from nearly two decades prior: "In 1799 I made a number of expts [experiments] in the decomposition of Nitre. By charcoal [*sic*] the details of which are published in a work entitled 'Researches Chem & Philosophical'."[51] Chronology had little bearing on Davy's note-taking as he mingles memories of past experiments with notations on current work.

The notebooks Davy kept during his travels also demonstrate his close early working relationship with Faraday. This becomes visible on facing pages of notes where Davy has sketched ideas on the recto, Faraday copied them on the verso, and then Davy made corrections to Faraday's transcriptions. (See Figures 3.1 & 3.2.) Faraday quickly became Davy's amanuensis, ordering the elder's thoughts and experiments. Davy admits as much in an 1818 preface to a publication on the safety lamp: "I am myself indebted to Mr. Michael Faraday for much able

[50] Royal Institution MS/HD/12, p. 111.

[51] Royal Institution MS/HD/12, p. 213.

assistance in the prosecution of my experiments."[52] Richard Holmes points out that this small acknowledgment "effectively launched his [Faraday's] scientific career."[53] Later, John Davy would inscribe entries that placed this notebook within Davy's daily life. He explains, "The writing in this book is in part that of Mr. Farad[a]y + in part that of my Brother: Mr. Faraday accompanied him into France + Italy about the time of the discovery of Iodine.—The incomplete drafts of Sir H's first paper on the substance is here begun in Mr F's hand writing continued in my Brother's. | J. Davy."[54] These notebooks thus took on various functions during Davy's own lifetime, and then became a primary source for his brother to mine while writing the biography. Even though John Davy and Michael Faraday valued Humphry Davy's notebooks as an inheritance, Humphry Davy seemed to think little of them after their initial uses. In part, this is because Davy did not write notes for posterity.

As Davy's health declined, his notebooks took the form of a medical journal. Once again, his own body is the object of inquiry. He notes his regimen of leaches, baths, and "a little extract of hydrogen . . ."[55] As we have seen, Davy's handwriting varies throughout his collection of notebooks ranging from only slightly messy to unreadable. This culminates in one of his last notebooks. Sick and travelling in Ischia in 1828, Davy records attempts to heal himself. On the inside cover, in childlike handwriting, Davy explains that it was "written with the left hand."[56] The resulting script suggests the physical pain Davy complains of in his letters from this time, the strokes and headaches, but specifically what John Davy called "the paralytic attack" that made writing extremely difficult.[57] Once again, Davy's altered handwriting makes his physical body visible—and reinforces the subjective content of his notes. This signature conveys a body in pain. Moreover, this page harkens back to Davy's early work with nitrous oxide and his grandiose handwriting while intoxicated. As the next section explores, Michael Faraday's notes differ in that when his handwriting changes it has nothing to do with

[52] Humphry Davy, *The Collected Works*, 6: 4.
[53] Holmes, *Age of Wonder*, p. 373.
[54] Holmes, *Age of Wonder*, p. 275.
[55] Royal Institution HD/14/M, p. 3.
[56] Royal Institution HD/14/M, inside cover.
[57] John Davy, "Preface," Sir Humphry Davy, *Consolations in Travel, Or, The Last Days of a Philosopher* (London: J. Murray, 1831), p. vi.

physiology, but rather his attention to elements of design—for example, he modifies his writing to designate titles. Davy's notes take on a physical quality as they continually foreground the experimenter's body. Yet this is precisely what those in the experimental sciences would come to see as invalid because it bore the marks of the experimenter. In the years following Davy's death, objectivity became increasingly sacrosanct, and those who engaged in experimental science attempted to erase signs of human interference. As we will see, Faraday was at the forefront of this movement.

The Book Seller's Apprentice: Faraday's Philosophical Miscellany

As a child, few would have suspected that Michael Faraday would go on to become one of the most important scientists in nineteenth-century Britain. His is the quintessential rags to riches tale—especially as told by the self-help contingent.[58] Born into the working class, Faraday received little formal education; however, his circumstances improved considerably when he took a job at Riebau's book shop. Here, he had access to more books than most and he read voraciously.[59] Among the more influential books the young Faraday encountered was Isaac Watts's *The Improvement of the Mind*. Convinced by Watts's arguments on acquiring knowledge, Faraday began to take notes while reading and attending lectures. Watts, like pedagogues before him, suggested that it was not enough to simply read books; one had to

[58] Samuel Smiles made much of Faraday's beginnings as a bookbinder and Davy's start as an apothecary's assistant in his Victorian best-seller, *Self-Help* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 24 and 115–117. In the twentieth century, Margaret Thatcher had a bust of Faraday on her desk and used his legacy to support her conservative political project. See Rebecca Richardson, *Material Ambitions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021).

[59] For more on Faraday's Biography, see Ryan D. Tweney's introduction to *Michael Faraday's "Chemical Notes, Hints, Suggestions, and Objects of Pursuit" of 1822* (London: IET, 1991).

See also, Leslie Pearce Williams, *Michael Faraday: A Biography [by] L. Pearce Williams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

"exercise . . . reason."[60] After all, he explains: "if all your learning be nothing else but a mere amassment of what others have written, without a due penetration into the meaning, and without a judicious choice and determination of your own sentiments, I do not see what title your head has to true learning."[61] More to the point, in a section on improving memory, Watts emphasizes the importance of "method and regularity," assisted by grouping ideas into "distinct and particular heads."[62] Watts suggests a variety of ways a student might file information under "heads:" the apothecary's assistant would benefit from grouping medicines in boxes according to their unique properties;[63] "Lawyers and divines" could note the "principle heads" they wish to communicate;[64] and that writing out what one wishes to remember is more effective than reading a passage multiple times.[65] Elsewhere, Watts praises Locke's method:

> Commit to writing some of the most considerable Improvements which you daily make, at least such Hints as may recall them again to your Mind, when perhaps they are vanished and lost. And here I think Mr. Locke's Method of *Adversaria* or *common places*, which he describes in the End of the first Volume of his *posthumous Works*, is the best; using no learned Method at all, setting down Things as they occur, leaving a distinct Page for each Subject, and making an Index to the Pages.[66]

Watts goes on to suggest that commonplace books provide a record of intellectual growth, that students should review their notes weekly, monthly, or yearly. This practice, Watts explains, will allow students to measure their progress. Watts convinced Faraday that the only way to strengthen memory and profit from reading was through systematic

[60] Isaac Watts, *The Improvement of the Mind* (London: Printed for J. Brackstone, 1743), p. 23.
[61] Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, p. 23.
[62] Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, p. 153.
[63] Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, p. 154.
[64] Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, p. 155.
[65] Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, p. 161.
[66] Isaac Watts, *Logick: Or, The Right Use of Reason in the Inquiry After Truth. With a Variety of Rules to Guard Against Error, in the Affairs of Religion and Human Life, as Well as in the Sciences* (London: Printed for J. Buckland, 1763), pp. 74–75.

repetition and organization under "heads" or topics. Along with Watts, Faraday credits Locke with "having taught me to think."[67]

Clearly, Faraday's is an upward mobility story—and, as I have already alluded to, his note-taking skills are at least partially responsible for his improbable success. While working in Riebau's shop, Faraday's industriousness caught the attention of a wealthy customer who gave the autodidact a gift of science lectures. Faraday made the most of this opportunity and employed a process of double note-taking. He transcribed the lectures as he sat in the audience; later, he would copy out his notes in an impeccably designed notebook, fit with pages of paratext—each new lecture received its own title page and a note marking its end. In the back, Faraday catalogued the entire notebook with an alphabetical index. Then he bound his notes himself and embossed the spine with his initials and the notes' subject. In 1810, he made a gift of one of these notebooks to Riebau. After a proper title page, Faraday inscribes a dedication. He thanks his employer for taking an interest in his studies, and "readily permitting me to examine those books in your possession that were any way related to the subjects then occupying my attention…" Faraday claims that whatever "small portion of knowledge relating to the sciences I possess"[68] are due to Riebau's generosity.

In transcribing lecture notes and then re-copying them in a cleaner form, Faraday joined a long tradition of student note-taking. As Matthew Daniel Eddy has shown, this layered approach to note-taking was a relatively standardized process. Enlightenment Scottish-university students regularly took "rough" notes during a lecture, "re-copied" the notes on fresh sheets, or a blank bound book, and provided paratext in the form of title pages and indexes (although, as Eddy explains, indexes were so time-consuming that many remain unfinished).[69] Once recopied, the notes circulated among other students in the class, and might be purchased by professors hoping to publish their works. Faraday, of course, never attended university, but he knew a great deal about books. His education as a bookbinder nurtured a talent for design, which Faraday used to assemble bound manuscripts that

[67] See Ryan D. Tweney, "Fields of Enterprise: On Michael Faraday's Thought," in *Creative People at Work: Twelve Cognitive Case Studies*, ed. Doris B. Wallace and Howard E. Gruber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[68] Royal Institution F/4/B/p.1.

[69] Matthew Daniel Eddy, "The Interactive Notebook: How Students Learned to Keep Notes during the Scottish Enlightenment," *Book History* 19, no. 1 (2016): 111.

were not only easy to read, but also aesthetically pleasing, with attention to spacing, font, color, and decorative flourishes.

And so, when another patron invited Faraday to Humphry Davy's final lecture series at the Royal Institution, the bookseller's apprentice had a plan. Once again, Faraday took "rough" notes during Davy's lectures and transcribed them into a beautiful book furnished with illustrations and a complete index. It was this notebook, which he bound himself, that would catapult Faraday into his successful career as a man of science. Looking back on this period, Faraday explained: "When I was a bookseller's apprentice . . . a gentleman, a member of the Royal Institution, took me to hear some of Sir. H. Davy's last lectures in Albemarle Street. I took notes, and afterwards wrote them out more fairly in a quarto volume."[70] Hoping for a job, Faraday bound his notes and sent them to Davy, who responded favorably, citing the bookbinder's "zeal, power of memory, and attention."[71]

Before he had a laboratory of his own, Faraday carried out experiments in his commonplace book. Indeed, before his 1812 notebook on Davy's lectures, Faraday had already played with commonplace-book form. In 1809, Faraday began his first commonplace book with an alphabetical index in the back, followed by the word "Finis" written in elegant script to signal the manuscript's end. He titled it *The Philosophical Miscellany* and describes the manuscript's contents and purposes as an experimental space for testing ideas:

> THE PHILOSOPHICAL MISCELLANY.
>
> being A collection of Notices, Occurrences, Events, &c. relating to the Arts and Sciences; collected from the Public Papers, Reviews, Magazines and other miscellaneous works.
>
> Intended to promote both Amusement and Instruction and also to corroborate or invalidate those theories which are continually starting into the world of science.
>
> Collected by M. Faraday 1809–10[72]

[70] John Ayrton Paris, *The Life of Sir Humphry Davy, Bart* (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831), p. 263.

[71] Bence Jones and Michael Faraday, *The Life and Letters of Faraday* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 48.

[72] Michael Faraday, *Philosophical Miscellany*, Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) MSS 2/1/1.

Faraday was well on his way to becoming an experimental scientist. As this note explains, the nascent chemist intended his collection to provide, "amusement and instruction," as well as a space for interrogating new "theories starting into the world of science." Of course, Faraday would not have his own laboratory for some time, and so he used this commonplace book to test out ideas, perform experiments, and record information gathered from magazines and newspapers. He takes to heart Watts's advice that the purpose of reading "is not merely to know the opinion of the author or speaker . . . but . . . to consider whether their opinions are right or no."[73] Faraday took this to mean that he should carry out experiments himself in order to validate others' findings. The early pages of this commonplace book show Faraday copying out notices from publications such as *The Christian Observer*, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and *Ackermann's Repository*. The latter publication introduced Faraday to an experiment on the eye's reaction to light and color. While first printed by the Royal Society on March 23, 1786, Faraday's careful citation reveals that he copied this extract from "*Ackermann's Repository* 1809 Vol 2 page 287."[74] Faraday transcribes instructions for carrying out the experiment on the verso, while the recto holds a single red circle meant to try out R.W. Darwin's experiment.

> 1. Place a piece of red silk, about an inch in diameter, on a sheet of White paper, in a strong light, look steadily upon it, from about the distance of half a yard, for a minute. Then close your eyelids, cover them with your hands, and a green spectrum will be seen in your eyes, resembling in form the piece of red silk. After sometime this Spectrum will disappear and shortly re-appear, and thus alternately three or four times if the experiment is well made, till at length it vanishes entirely.

Faraday used this book not just to copy out extracts but to supply the illustrations they lacked. The experiment would be indexed in the back of Faraday's commonplace book under the letter "O" as "Ocular Spectra." Faraday's industriousness, focus, and artistry at the end of his teenage years portend the work to come.

[73] Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, p. 41.
[74] Faraday, *Philosophical Miscellany*, p. 16.

By 1813, Faraday, now employed by the Royal Institution, accompanied Davy on his travels through the Continent and brought along a second commonplace book—in fact, the title page reads "Common Place Book | Vol. 2."[75] Faraday pencils an "Introduction:"

> This journal is not intended to instruct and inform, or to convey an imperfect idea of what it speaks of; its sole use is to recall to my mind at some future time the things I see now; and the most effectual way to do that will be, I conceive, to write down, be they good or bad, or however imperfect my present impressions.[76]

Faraday views his notebook as a technology of memory, a tool to capture "things I see now" so as to recall them later. The first page, written in ink, reads like a diary entry. Departing for the Continent, Faraday notes that "this morning formed a new epoch in my life" because he had never "left London at a greater distance than twelve miles."[77] The majority of this commonplace book contains the same layout: Faraday inscribes the date at the top of the verso, the location at the top of the recto, with the general topic placed on the top, inside edge of each page. For example, on a page labeled "Italy, Rome," Faraday writes the topic, "The Coliseum," towards the inside margin. And, when in November of 1815, Faraday watches an experiment with iodine in Paris, he notes the date, location, and general topic (Iodine). Thus, the top of the verso looks like this:

1815 Nov. Iodine

And the top of the recto reads:

Woodfires France, Paris

On this occasion, Faraday remarks, "Unfortunately for me I as yet know nothing of the language or I should have learned much more concerning this singular substance."[78] On the following day, Faraday found himself indoors with nothing to do so he turned to his notes: "W. 24th"—entries beginning in the middle of a page start with the first letter of the day of the week and the date. To occupy himself, he reflects on differences between France and England. For example, given the

[75] IET MSS 002/1/2, p. ii.
[76] IET MSS 002/1/2, p. iii.
[77] IET SC/MSS 002/1/21, p.1.
[78] IET SC/MSS 002/1/21, p. 215.

cold weather, Faraday's eyes were immediately drawn to the fireplace, where he noted that the French used wood to burn fires, while the English used coal. Faraday designates this page with the topic "Woodfires." In the last few pages, Faraday shifts the general topics from the top of the page to the outside margins. Again, Faraday demonstrates his talent for design. Moving general topics to the outside margins allows for easier searching, suggesting that Faraday would flip through pages to find topics. This is a formatting change that Faraday will continue for the next decade, including in his next commonplace book.

For his third commonplace book, Faraday purchased a pre-formatted notebook—much like those described in Chapter 1—fit with Locke's index and instructions on his method. Printed in 1800 in London by A. Macpherson, the title page bears two "sanctions" for the commonplace method from the 1790s. The *British Critic* suggests that commonplace books function as more than repositories of extracts; they also record the compiler's "sentiments" arising from various activities including scientific exploration. The following quote, from Rede's *Anecdotes and Biography*, highlights how a historian (Dr Robertson) made use of his commonplace book to impress a wide range of acquaintances.[79]

> SANCTIONS.
>
> No man engaged in literary occupations ought to be without the advantages of a *Common Place Book*, which may serve as the register of his sentiments, resulting either from the exploring activity of a contemplative mind, the energy of superior genius, or investigations of a scientific nature. Without this aid many valuable thoughts must be lost in the while of less important business; Mr. *Locke* greatly benefited the cause of literature when he stooped from loftier speculations to form the plan of a valuable repository of this kind. *British Critic, Feb 1794—*

[79] See Leman Thomas Rede, *Anecdotes and Biography: Including Many Modern Characters in the Circles of Fashionable and Official Life, Selected from the Portfolios of a Distinguished Literary and Political Character, Lately Deceased, Alphabetically Arranged*, 2nd ed (London: Printed by J. W. Myers for Crosby and Letterman and R. Pitkeathley, 1799), p. 361.

> —It was his Practice to record in a *Common Place Book*, the Anecdotes and ingenious Conversation of the Day, and he was so happy in introducing these Anecdotes into Conversations, that, whether he associated with Lawyers, Soldiers, or Merchants, all of them left the Company, impressed with an Idea that he had made their Professions his study. *Rede's Anecdotes and Biography*. 1799.[80]

Faraday took these messages to heart and might be one of the only nineteenth-century students to fill out Locke's index completely (see Figure 1.1).

Throughout his life, Faraday worried over his "treacherous" memory.[81] It would become a more acute concern in the 1840s,[82] but even in this commonplace book, begun in 1816, he studied various mnemonic techniques, indexed in the space marked "Me"—for the first letter and first vowel of "memory." The second page begins with the subject "memory." Faraday modeled his illustration from "M Von Feinaigle['s] system of Mnemonics,"[83] which depicts a multi-dimensional memory palace (yet another example of how Faraday copied illustrations that he encountered in print). Faraday filled his memory palace with "all the symbols I know as belonging to his system."[84] Each room in the house, according to Feinaigle, should be designated by a symbol: the Tower of Babel for the first room; a swan for the second; Parnassus, or the mountain for the third, and so on. Feinaigle's illustration is a multi-dimensional iteration of the classical discourse on artificial memory—the *loci* method, which relied on mental images or locations such as "a house, an intercolumnar space, a recess, an arch, or the like."[85]

[80] IET SC MSS 002/1/4. For a similar pre-fitted commonplace book, available on Google Books see *Common Place Book… A New Edition, Newly Arranged and Simplified, by R. Pitkeathley* (1840).

[81] Michael Faraday, *The Correspondence of Michael Faraday: 1841–1848*, edited by Frank James, vol. 1 (London: IET, 1991), February 20, 1845 to Schoenbein.

[82] See E.H. Hare, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 67 no. 7 (July 1974): 617–618 for a medical hypothesis concerning Faraday's memory loss.

[83] IET SC MSS 002/1/4, p. 4. This work was first published by John Millard, *The New Art of Memory, Founded upon the Principles Taught by M. Gregor von Feinaigle; to Which Is Prefixed, Some Account of the Principal Systems of Artificial Memory* (London: Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1812).

[84] IET SC/MSS 002/1/4, p. 4.

[85] Marcus Tullius Cicero. "Rhetorica Ad Herennium." In *Loeb Classical Library*, translated by Harry Caplan. 403. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954, vol. 2, p. 209.

An orator wishing to remember many things would equip his mind with several backgrounds that he could fill with images tied to specific memories. The *loci* method, often referred to as the memory palace, uses the mind's ability to remember spaces (rather than lists of numbers or words) to store information. Faraday used this notebook not only to gather information extracted from reading but also to record details observed from experimentation. For example, the following page details a "peculiar phenomenon" he witnessed during an experiment with zinc (the chemical serves as the page's general topic).

Faraday's interest in organization might also relate to his religious commitments as a Sandemanian, a Protestant sect founded in the early eighteenth century. Sandemanians rejected clergy as well as any other political or secular entanglements; instead, they studied the bible as the word and spirit of Christ. Geoffrey Cantor, who has written extensively about Faraday as a Sandemanian, explains that Faraday's interest in observable facts was a religious matter. "Just as the Sandemanians prize every word in the Bible as incorrigible truth not to be misinterpreted by man, so Faraday looked upon scientific facts as the basic words or signs comprising the book of nature."[86] Thus, for Faraday, organized note-taking was not just a matter of good science, it was also profoundly religious.

Chemical Notes

Faraday's first laboratory notebooks from the 1820s maintain two central elements of his earlier commonplace books. Here, he organizes information under general topics, written on the pages' outer margins and catalogued in an alphabetical index. And, secondly, he continues to date entries, narrating his experiments as though in a diary. Dating entries would emerge as a significant aspect of Faraday's methods, as he explains in his guide for students: "The account of the day's

[86] Geoffrey Cantor, "Reading the Book of Nature: The Relation Between Faraday's Religion and His Science," in *Faraday Rediscovered: Essays on the Life and Work of Michael Faraday, 1791–1867*, ed. David Gooding and Frank A. J. L. James (Basingstoke: Stockton Press, 1985), p. 73. See also Geoffrey Cantor, *Michael Faraday: Sandemanian and Scientist: A Study of Science and Religion in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Springer, 2016).

experiments should always be prefaced by noting down in the book the day, month, and year . . ."[87] Even as he began to revise his note-taking strategies, the commonplace method remained a guiding principle: he collected vast amounts of information which he categorized and indexed for later use. While Faraday did not change his organizational strategies at this time, he began to focus exclusively on chemical subjects. It seems likely that Faraday learned how to organize his notes from Davy's successor at the Royal Institution, William Brande.[88] Brande valued the alphabetical index as a means of organizing his notes in manuscripts labeled "Experiment book."[89] Many of them began with alphabetical indexes listing the "Subject" and corresponding "Page." Faraday worked closely with Brande as "Superintendent" of the laboratory,[90] and he would have had ample opportunity to observe Brande's notes. Of the two, Faraday was by far the more diligent note-taker. Many of Brande's indexes remain incomplete, with notebooks abandoned halfway through. One such experiment book organizes notes alphabetically by chemicals (copper and silver) and compounds (alcohol and sugar), as Faraday would in his 1822 "Chemical Notes, Hints, Suggestions and Objects of Pursuit."[91]

Faraday's "Chemical Notes" include paratext reminiscent of his earlier commonplace books. On the title page, Faraday proclaims his devotion to the commonplace method: "I already owe much to these notes and I think such a collection worth the making by every scientific man. I am sure none would think the trouble lost after several years' experience."[92] His career had just begun, but Faraday attributes his scientific success to careful note-taking. On the following page, Faraday writes out his "General Subjects:" these begin with chemicals (nitrogen, sulfur, phosphorous, etc.) until midway through when the subjects become more

[87] Faraday, *Chemical Manipulations*, p. 559.

[88] I would like to thank Jane Harrison of the Royal Institution for suggesting this connection.

[89] See Royal Institution NI/1–2.

[90] Royal Institution of Great Britain, *Minutes of the Managers' Meetings 1799–1900* (London: The Scolar Press, 1973), May 1821, 6: 328.

[91] IET 2/1/5. For a facsimile of this notebook, and an excellent introduction, see Faraday, Tweney, and Gooding, *Chemical Notes*.

[92] Faraday, Tweney, and Gooding, *Chemical Notes*, p. 3. See also, L. Pearce Williams, "Michael Faraday's Chemical Notebook: Portrait of the Scientist as a Young Man," *Phys. Educ.* 26 (1991): 278.

general (Electricity, Heat & Light, Organic Chemistry, etc.). Though Faraday had used chemicals as general topics before (as he had with iodine in Paris), this time, however, chemical facts occupy his entire collection. Like his "Chemical Notes," Faraday's commitment to the commonplace method informs how he chose to structure his other laboratory notebooks. This is most obviously visible in his first laboratory notebooks from the 1820s. Here, he wrote general topics on each page's outer margin and catalogued them in an alphabetical index.[93]

By 1827, Faraday's career had taken off and he wrote student manuals that encouraged notebook use. He warned: "The practice of delaying to note until the end of a train of experiments or to the conclusion of the day, is a bad one, as it then becomes difficult accurately to remember that succession of events."[94] Here, Faraday advocates for the laboratory notebook as an essential tool for scientific objectivity, a safeguard against one's fallible memory. His careful attention to organization is the framework of precision. Discussing Faraday's notes, Gooding and Tweney explain how Faraday's active role in commonplacing distinguished him from earlier scientists who also relied on commonplace books. "Faraday was no mere Baconian, holding that simple accumulation of facts would lead to knowledge. He was a constructive thinker for whom knowledge arose from an active interaction of head and hands, and between the 'knower' and the 'known.'"[95] Faraday's strict organizational schemes honor this careful balance as he ordered both the observable natural world and his abstract ideas. Yet, as his work progressed, the static alphabetical index he had learned from Locke became less useful. Thus, Faraday, like many great thinkers before him, came up with his own, unique indexing system to fit his own epistemic needs.

Faraday's Cut-up Index

Reading through Faraday's laboratory notebooks exposes a gradual falling away of Locke's method in favor of a numerical system and cut-up index—all of which suggests how Faraday's scientific method

[93] See Royal Institution, F/02/A-J.
[94] Faraday, *Chemical Manipulations*, p. 546.
[95] Faraday, Tweney, and Gooding, *Chemical Notes*, p. xi.

demanded different organizational frameworks than those he used earlier in his career. By 1831, Faraday had devised a new method that relied on numbering entries. He would restart numbering several times before August 1832, when he settled into a continuous system. Thus, in August of 1832, he labeled an entry #1[96] and continued until his final entry—#16041—written on March 6, 1860.[97] Faraday's numbering system creates a uniformity among notebooks that facilitates cross-referencing. In these laboratory notebooks, Faraday organized his entries as a list with corresponding numbers progressively assigned to each entry (not unlike Sala's method discussed in Chapter 1). As he published material from his notes, he drew vertical lines through pages he had used. Clearly, Faraday's notes bear a direct relation to his published writings. Indeed, he used his numerical method in his published works as well as his manuscripts. In 1831, he published the first series of *Experimental Researches in Electricity*, and marked each paragraph with a number, starting at 1 and concluding with 139. The second series picked up where the first ended and began with 140. Subsequent series followed the same pattern so that by the fourteenth series, Faraday's paragraphs numbered 1748.[98] This system allowed Faraday to refer to previous paragraphs in his published work—just as he directed himself to previous entries in his commonplace book.[99]

It was this method that supported Faraday's revolutionary theorization of electromagnetic induction. While his contemporaries thought of electricity and magnetism in Newtonian terms, imagining a push and pull of forces acting at a distance in a straight line,[100] Faraday proposed a circular force. In this respect, Faraday's lack of education benefited him; had he gone to Oxford or Cambridge, he would have been so steeped in Newtonian thought that it is doubtful he would have been able to think in such a contrary way. Even so, his lack of schooling also meant that Faraday struggled with mathematics, which made it difficult for him to convince his peers of the electromagnetic field. As he wrote to Ampère, a French Newtonian, he felt acutely aware of his lack of

[96] Royal Institution, F/2/D. [97] Royal Institution, F/2/I.

[98] Michael Faraday, *Experimental Researches in Electricity* (London: B. Quaritch, 1839).

[99] This style was common. Brande's *A Manual of Chemistry* and Maxwell's *A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* followed the same format.

[100] Nancy Forbes and Basil Mahon, *Faraday, Maxwell, and the Electromagnetic Field: How Two Men Revolutionized Physics* (New York: Prometheus, 2014), p. 40.

"mathematical knowledge and the power of entering with facility any abstract reasoning. I am obliged to feel my way by facts placed closely together."[101] Most physicists with a background in mathematics considered Faraday's ideas "vague and varying," as Sir George Airy put it.[102] Faraday could not offer a solid mathematical formula to prove his theory of electromagnetic induction until a young Scottish mathematician, James Maxwell, took up Faraday's "lines of force" and produced the so-called Maxwell–Faraday equation.[103] Maxwell provided the mathematical expertise Faraday lacked. To be sure, Faraday's notes contain less numbers than one might expect. For this reason, some scholars have analyzed Faraday's notes as a bridge between the amateur natural philosopher and the expert scientists of the later nineteenth century. For example, H. Otto Sibum argues that Faraday's laboratory notebooks resemble the gentleman's journal. He contrasts Faraday's notebooks, which consist almost entirely of words, with those of Joule and Babbage, who, Sibum argues, used numbers rather than words to narrate natural phenomena. Relying on the explanatory power of mathematics signaled "the new culture of precision broadly taking command in the early nineteenth century."[104] Faraday's professed difficulty with abstraction is perhaps one of the reasons he relied so extensively on his notebooks. They offered the chemist a place to make abstract ideas visible, including, remarkably, the circular patterns of the electromagnetic field.

To make the electromagnetic field visible, Faraday invented a new printing method: not with ink and a press, but with iron filings and the electromagnetic field. This method produced curved lines and a kind of evidence that fit within a culture of "image-bound scientific objectivity," to use Daston and Galison's term. And so, in addition to collecting

[101] Michael Faraday, *The Correspondence of Michael Faraday: 1841–1848*, ed. James Frank, vol. 1 (London: IET, 1991), September 3, 1822, pp. 287–288.

[102] Forbes and Mahon, *Faraday, Maxwell, and the Electromagnetic Field*, p. 160.

[103] Maxwell kept notebooks as well. Three are housed at UCL and others can be found at Cambridge University. They contain a variety of material including equations, but also household notes, and "commonplaces . . . abstracted from scientific authorities including the works of Arthur Cayley . . . Neumann . . . etc." (See UCL Maxwell 3.)

[104] H. Otto Sibum, "Narrating by Numbers: Keeping an Account of Early 19th Century Laboratory Experiences," in *Reworking the Bench: Research Notebooks in the History of Science*, ed. F. L. Holmes, J. Renn, and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), p. 104.

handwritten, real-time observations, Faraday arranged physical evidence that testified to the objective truth of his discoveries. As Faraday continued to experiment with electromagnetism, he collected material scraps and, pasted in papers to demonstrate the "lines of force" he would go on to describe in *Experimental Researches in Electricity*: "By magnetic curves, I mean the lines of magnetic forces, however modified by the juxtaposition of poles, which would be depicted by iron filings."[105] In his notebook, he labeled each of the "illustrations" with titles such as, "3 wires—like currents; 3 wires—1 and 2 like currents | 3 contrary currents; lines over a ring helix . . ." With iron filings, Faraday ingeniously found a method for making the field visible. In consequence, these laboratory notebooks take on properties of the scrapbook, with pasted cuttings taken from Faraday's laboratory. Forbes and Mahon explain Faraday's remarkable innovation: ". . . every electric current created a circular magnetic force around itself—a force that seemed to have a physical presence in the surrounding space. Similarly, every magnet created a pattern of forces that acted along *curved* paths in the space around it."[106] In the twentieth century, Albert Einstein would praise the electromagnetic field as "the most important invention since Newton's time," and claimed that "it needed great scientific imagination to realize that it is not the charges nor the particles but the field in the space between the charges and the particles that is essential for the description of physical phenomena."[107] As Faraday continued to experiment with force fields, he also innovated new organizational schemes for his notes.

By this time, Faraday had committed to his numerical system; however, what he gained in continuity, he lost in flexibility. One advantage of Locke's method was that even if entries did not appear consecutively, the index grouped them together. As Faraday's numbered entries accumulated in his commonplace books, indexing became even more complicated. He had to invent a new organizational strategy. This time he began creating paper slips with general topics, references to experiments, and corresponding numbered entries.

[105] Faraday, *Experimental Researches*, Series I, p. 32.
[106] Forbes and Mahon, *Faraday, Maxwell, and the Electromagnetic Field*, pp. 77–78.
[107] Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics: The Growth of Ideas from Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938), p. 244.

Because these slips were mobile, he was able to organize and then reorganize outlines for his writing. Once he settled on a course, he would paste these slips onto a single page—dynamism proved to be another feature of scrapbooking. As movable data points, Faraday could reorder his slips to juxtapose index entries when their corresponding pages remained static. For example, one particular page of Faraday's cut-up index begins with entry 15806 but ends with 15562.[108]

Thus, Faraday innovated a different kind of index, this time, via the assembly of loose slips of paper he would then arrange into groupings. Though he would experiment with different forms of cut-and-paste outlines and indexes, he continued using the system until the end of his career.[109] Ryan Tweney, who has published extensively on Faraday's organizational methods, explains that because this numbering system was "fixed and unvarying" it necessitated a more dynamic system for connecting entries and retrieving information. Tweney explains that Faraday's numbering system offers an example of both "serial and parallel processing." The numbers progress in a linear fashion—there is a beginning, middle, and end. The loose slips, however, allow "parallel processing" because, Tweney argues, it allows sections of the notes to be read "with *near* simultaneity."[110] Another way to think about the relationship between numbered entries and slips is in terms of episodic and semantic memory. Episodic memory captures specific experiences while semantic memory relates to general categories. Faraday's numbered entries preserve discrete experimental observations, while the cut-and-paste indexes group these specific memories under general categories.[111]

[108] Royal Institution MS F 02 I, p. 1.

[109] Ryan D. Tweney, "Faraday's Notebooks: The Active Organization of Creative Science," *Physics Education* 26, no. 5 (September 1991): 301–306.

[110] Ryan D. Tweney, "Serial and Parallel Processing in Scientific Discovery," ed. Robert Giere and Herbert Feigl, *Cognitive Models of Science* 15 (1992): 83.

[111] See Ryan Tweney and Christopher Ayala. "Memory and the Construction of Scientific Meaning: Michael Faraday's Use of Notebooks and Records." *Memory Studies* 8 (June 3, 2015), p. 435: "Faraday used the chronological record of the notebooks to order and construct a very different kind of cognitive structure, in effect transitioning his episodic records (from his notebooks) to a more generalized account in which the specific records are structured into a coherent whole, a process akin to the way in which semantic memory emerges from episodic memory."

Printing Speech: Dickens on Faraday

Before this chapter concludes, consider one more use of Faraday's notebooks. As a student, he had diligently taken notes at lectures; now, as the expert, he was delivering those lectures himself. Accordingly, he kept a different kind of notebook. The notes he brought on stage included his speech on the recto, while the facing verso outlines the progress of experiments Faraday performed simultaneously.[112] Yet again, his note-taking method owes much to William Brande, who ordered his lecture notes in a similar fashion.[113] Once Faraday faced his audience, the two sides of his notebook would merge seamlessly together. Faraday organized his lectures with the same attention to detail he had honed decades earlier while taking notes in the same lecture hall as Humphry Davy expounded upon chemistry.

When Faraday became director of the Royal Institution in 1825, he inherited the problem of raising money to save the Institution from bankruptcy. Faraday harnessed the power of oration and began the enormously popular Friday Evening Discourses. Based on its success, he created the "Christmas Lectures" for children. That both of these series continue today testifies to their popularity. Faraday was a "prince of lecturers"[114] because he started with the simplest presentation of his subject, thereby building common ground with his audience. From there, he would guide his audience to unfamiliar subjects, "before the audience became aware of any transition, they were already assimilating new facts which were thus brought within their range."[115] In fact, Faraday worked to hone his oratory skills. As his early commonplace books reveal, he had been studying the subject for quite some time.

In his commonplace book, begun on January 3, 1818, Faraday records notes taken from lectures on oratory by Mr Benjamin Humphry Smart. These notes cover elements of speech, such as the

[112] For an overview of this notebook, see Frank James's Introduction to Michael Faraday, *Chemical History of a Candle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[113] See Brande's lecture notes in RI/N1/01.

[114] Thomas Henry Huxley, *Evolution & Ethics, and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1894), p. vii.

[115] Silvanus Phillips Thompson, *Michael Faraday: His Life and Work* (London: Macmillan, 1898), p. 232.

correct pronunciation of the letter "H"[116] and a warning to follow common pronunciation, which Faraday underlined: "Do not be the first to introduce new pronunciations or the last to quit old ones but take such as are according to the usage of the times."[117] Smart's first lecture begins with a glance back to ancient times, when "the philosophers taught in their schools and instilled these precepts directly into the ears and breasts of their pupils . . ."[118] Smart repeats a suspicion as old as *The Phaedrus* (and one to which we will return in the following chapter): oral culture facilitates an immediate connection between speaker and audience, but writing (or print) separates the text from its author. How, then, is one to trust something read when so much of the author is lost? Smart continues to explain how listeners might find themselves "animated with his [the philosopher's] spirit."[119] While Smart allows that the printing press has benefited humanity, it has robbed readers of the author's emotions. In Smart's nineteenth century, "we receive this communication through the cold lifeless medium of arbitrary characters, but though we preserve the sense entire for ages the feeling the enthusiasm is gone forever" [*sic*].[120] Following Smart, Faraday understood the value of live scientific demonstrations —he had experienced it first hand at the City Philosophical Society and then at Davy's lectures at the Royal Institution. And, he would harness the power of oration to become one of the most celebrated lecturers in nineteenth-century England.

Of all Faraday's lectures, his "Chemical History of a Candle" remains the most famous for several reasons. One of these reasons, Frank James suggests, is that new theories have not usurped the science behind this experiment.[121] At first Faraday resisted printing his lectures, perhaps remembering Smart's warning. Faraday argued that print removes the vivacity of a live orator and the example of real experimentation (by all accounts, Faraday had a unique capacity to connect with his audience). Though Faraday worried that too much would be lost in translating his lectures to print, he was willing to make an exception for a man of singular narrative talents. In 1850, Charles Dickens persuaded Faraday

[116] IET MSS 2/1/2, p. 199.
[117] IET MSS 2/1/2, p. 199.
[118] IET MSS 2/1/2, p. 182.
[119] IET MSS 2/1/2, p. 182.
[120] IET MSS 2/1/2, p. 183.
[121] James, "Introduction," in *The Chemical History of a Candle*, p. xli.

to lend him his lecture notes so that he could share them with the audience of his new magazine, *Household Words*. Dickens wrote, "It has occurred to me that it would be extremely beneficial to a large class of the public to have some account of your late lectures . . ."[122] Perhaps one of the reasons Faraday was comfortable with Dickens reporting on his lectures was that Dickens, with his narrative skills, could approximate the energy of live lectures. Dickens transformed Faraday's notes into a fictional dialogue between a child, Harry Wilkinson, and his Uncle Bagges. Harry's mother explains, after her son mentions the word oxygen, that he ". . . means something he heard at the Royal Institution . . . He reads a great deal about chemistry, and he attended Professor Faraday's lectures there on the chemical history of a candle . . ."[123] In true Dickensian form, the child educates his elders; using Faraday's words and experiments, Harry explains the chemistry of the candle. Harry begins by simply asking his uncle to observe a candle—presumably Dickens's readers would do the same, carrying out their own empirical observations along with Harry and Uncle Bagges. Faraday's notes explain that "fire produces water . . . But how is the water produced from a candle? Where does it come from? It comes partly from the wax of the candle and partly from the air—and yet it is not water that comes from the wax or from the air—and the truth of the mystery when realized is as follows . . ."[124] On the verso of this page, Faraday reminds himself to put a candle in a jar with a tube.

To convey the same information, Dickens constructs the following dialogue between Harry and Uncle Bagges:

> ". . . Suppose you were to put a very slender gas-burner over the flame, and let the flame burn just within the end of it, as if it were a chimney,—some of the hot steam would go up and come out at the top, but a sort of dew would be left behind in the glass chimney, if the chimney was cold enough . . . . when it is collected it turns out to be really water. I am not joking, uncle. Water is one of the things which the candle turns into in burning . . ."

[122] Faraday, *Correspondence*, Letter 2291. In return, Dickens sent Faraday a copy of *David Copperfield*, which would be published in November of that year.
[123] Charles Dickens. "The Chemistry of a Candle." *Household Words* I (1850): 439.
[124] Faraday, *The Chemical History of a Candle*, p. 9.

> "Water out of a candle, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Bagges. "As hard to get, I should have thought, as blood out of a post. Where does it come from?"
>
> "Part from the wax, and part from the air, and yet not a drop of it comes either from the air or the wax. What do you make of that uncle?"
>
> "Eh? Oh! I'm no hand at riddles. Give it up."[125]

Dickens conveys the drama of Faraday's demonstrations through Mr Bagges's sense of wonder. And the dialogue unravels the mystery of the chemical reactions that almost magically produce water from a candle.

In the 1860s, Faraday finally allowed a chemist and journalist, William Crookes,[126] to publish his lectures on "Various Forces of Matter" in the *Chemical News*. Pleased with the results, Faraday permitted Crookes to do the same for his lectures on the "Chemical History of the Candle." But what caused Faraday's sudden change of heart? Frank James speculates that Faraday ultimately decided to publish his lectures because of the growing fervor over spiritualism, which he ardently opposed.[127] Faraday hoped to counter this trend with actual science. Crookes's editions of Faraday's lectures proved to be the publisher's most lucrative venture, evidence of society's fascination with Faraday and scientific knowledge. Crookes translated Faraday's live lectures into print with the use of illustrations and a footnote that explains the lectures were "reported verbatim by special permission."[128]

Faraday's lectures began in manuscript form, intended for an oral performance, but reached a broad audience because of print. In this last iteration, the experiments would have to be described with words or images. Faraday's pronunciation or the way he held his arms (all the material on oratory he had studiously recorded during Smart's lectures) had to be reproduced as narrative. These retellings were designed to entertain and instruct—to teach children an empirical ethos that located scientific truth claims in material evidence gleamed from controlled experimentation. Faraday, like most great Victorian natural

[125] Dickens. "The Chemistry of a Candle," p. 441.

[126] For more on Crookes, see William H. Brock, *William Crookes (1832–1919) and the Commercialization of Science* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[127] See James's "Introduction" to *History of a Candle*. James notes that, ironically, Faraday met Crookes at a séance.

[128] William Crookes. "Dr. Faraday's Sixth Lecture: History of a Candle." *The Chemical News and Journal of Industrial Science*, vol: 3 (1861): 84.

philosophers, understood the power of narrative. Much like early modern commonplaces that were powerful insofar as they fit into a larger narrative, facts had scientific weight only if they had explanatory power. And that explanatory power rested in large part upon the stories they helped to tell. The great texts of Victorian natural history, exemplified by Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, assemble facts into a story that recirculate in scientific discourse.[129] As Charles Darwin admitted, before he could write *Origin of Species*, he would first have to "collect . . . so large a body of facts . . ."[130] The next chapter moves from the natural philosopher's laboratory to the field as archeologists, geologists, and antiquarians collected fragmented ruins of past civilizations.

[129] Following Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots*, the relationship between scientific and fictional narrative has been fruitful ground for literary studies. Richard Sha recently quipped that "work on Romantic science has become a virtual cottage industry." See *Imagination and Science in Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), p. 1.

[130] Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), p. 128.

4

Commonplace Books of History

Though little remembered now, Faraday and Davy often took up the mantle of geology. George Eliot imagines the two of them, in what has become understood as her *Daniel Deronda* notebook: "Faraday and Sir Humphrey [*sic*] Davy burning diamonds & finding the result 'invisible carbonic acid'."[1] It is easy to see why this must have been a compelling image for the novelist, thinking of how those precious stones burned into an invisible substance. Faraday's meteoric rise is also inchoate in this tableau. For Eliot, as it is for us, hindsight gives texture to this anecdote. The nature of history was an enduring theme for Eliot, who writes about, "how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of time."[2] Moreover, the historian's lens can transform what had once been invisible into something starkly obvious. In the previous chapter, I argued that real-time entries in commonplace books served as marks of objectivity in Michael Faraday's laboratory. Memory, as Faraday and other natural philosophers understood it, corrupts information. For natural *historians*, however, the relationship between memory and objectivity was rather different. In the case of antiquarianism, archeology, and geology, real-time observations proved impossible because the object of study was always at

[1] NYPL, Pforzheimer MISC 0711. See George Eliot, *George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda" Notebooks*, edited by Jane Irwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 238. Eliot was obviously thinking of Geology when she wrote this, as it occurs under a reference to Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago*. At the same times, Jane Irwin's footnote informs us that Eliot was reading Gladstone's biography of Michael Faraday. See John Hall Gladstone, *Michael Faraday* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1874), p. 15.

[2] George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. Rosemary Ashton, rev. edn (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 3.

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums.
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a historical remove. Rather than privilege direct observation as a mark of truth, natural historians considered physical materials the best kind of evidence. This chapter focuses on how historians used the commonplace tradition to collect archival evidence. While some of this evidence is literary—manuscript transcriptions of traditional ballads—much is tactile, including legal documents, architectural remains, and other relics. Time marked the geologist's fossils and the archeologist's pottery, leaving each in pieces for researchers to decipher. Because old materials often appeared incomplete, the fragment became a mark of authenticity. As Jason B. Jones has argued, the primary challenge of historicism has been the past's irretrievability because "part of historical consciousness involves recognizing the gaps in the historical record."[3] Historical knowledge is by its very nature fragmented, broken off from its original context. Archeological and geological discourse on fragments intersected with new developments in photography that simultaneously preserved fragments and allowed for their broader circulation. And for this reason, historians often used the commonplace method to collect material scraps as historical evidence. As the nineteenth century progressed, print technologies made visual reproduction increasingly prevalent; thus, facsimile and, ultimately, photographic evidence became a vital aspect of historical argumentation. Natural historians, I argue, increasingly commonplaced extracts as paper clippings rather than handwritten excerpts. Accordingly, books of scraps eventually served the purpose that handwritten commonplace books had. The scrapbook, in other words, is the commonplace book in a nineteenth-century media ecology.

In the nineteenth century, scraps referred to both conceptual fragments of literature as well as material cuttings. Fragments, associated with antiquity and Romantic-era aesthetic principles, garnered more prestige than scraps, which were understood to be flimsy or ephemeral. Coleridge's aphorisms, for example, are decidedly not scraps. Instead, *Aids to Reflection* is part of a larger discourse on the relationship between the formally compact and the conceptually large. Historical fragments functioned aesthetically, representing vast swaths of time. Think of Shelley's "Ozymandias," a poem that surveys the ruins of empire, or Keats's meditations on mortality inspired by the Elgin

[3] Jason Jones, *Lost Causes: Historical Consciousness in Victorian Literature* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 1.

Marbles—"That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude | Wasting of old time."[4] These verses refer to specific remains, and fit within a culture of imperial expansion that extracted (more accurately, stole) ancient artistry from across the globe and deposited it within newly formed national museums. Imagine George Eliot pausing to admire the Elgin Marbles on her way to copy information gleaned from the British Museum's books.[5] (She would transcribe "Ode to a Grecian Urn" in one of her commonplace books[6] and visit Keats's grave in Rome). Imagine her stopping outside of Dante's birthplace to consider the sounds he would have heard. After all, this is where *Romola* begins, with the "unhistorical" noises of 1492. This prologue reflects Eliot's larger interest in historical remains that jut through to the present day and offer glimpses of a former life. Meditations on ancient fragments dovetail with the newly developing discourses of geology and archeology, which fascinated novelists like George Eliot and Walter Scott. Over the course of the nineteenth century, archeology developed from the "largely amateur nature of antiquarianism" into a professional field.[7] Archeology was "at once the scientific arm of antiquarianism and the branch of geology focused on human artifacts."[8] Archeology and geology developed their studies of artifacts into professional fields with strict standards. By contrast, antiquarianism remained a field for amateurs because its practitioners were far more interested in imagined narratives of historical fiction than the rigorous study of observable phenomena.[9] Despite their different methods, Victorian antiquarianism, archeology, and geology all focused on accidental fragments, worn

[4] John Keats, *Keats's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*. Edited by Jeffrey N. Cox. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009; lines 12–13.

[5] For more on Eliot's uncomfortable relationship with the British Museum, see Susan David Bernstein, *Roomscape: Women Writers in the British Museum from George Eliot to Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

[6] New York Public Library, Pf. 711 3. See *George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda" Notebooks*, p. 237.

[7] P. J. A. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 23.

[8] Virginia Zimmerman, *Excavating Victorians* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), p. 100.

[9] For more on the formation of archeology as a professional field, see Levine's *The Amateur and the Professional*, which demonstrates how antiquarianism, archeology, and geology coalesced into nineteenth-century historicism.

down and broken over centuries. These fragments carried history with them; narrative, it seemed, could reveal their secrets.

This chapter focuses on three writers who collected antiquarian fragments to support historical narratives—Walter Scott; George Eliot; and the Shakespearean scholar, James Orchard Halliwell. All three writers concerned themselves with questions of authenticity and the role of narrative in conveying the fragmented remains of the past. For this reason, all three writers associated themselves with geology and archeology. Nevertheless, each author had different strategies for collecting scraps of information and communicating historical narratives to the public. Walter Scott collected an abundance of papers including letters that explain folk traditions and antique documents that undergird and interrupt his historical novels. By the Victorian period, archeology, geology, and the historical novel had become more disparate entities. Thus, I argue that while the commonplace method remained crucial for Victorian novelists like George Eliot, the form of her novels conceals their origins in commonplace books. Conversely, historians, like James Orchard Halliwell, made their scrapbooks a part of their publications. Halliwell cared less for narrative and more for facsimile proof of the enormous troves of scraps he collected. The way each author organized their documents is telling: Scott had piles of papers in his desk and cupboards; Eliot transcribed her research into uniform notes in her commonplace books; and Halliwell left behind more than 300 bound manuscripts filled with what he called "Literary Scraps" and "Shakespeareana," stuffed with priceless antiquarian artifacts torn from books and manuscripts.[10] In short, each author found a different balance between historical artifact and narration.

In the eighteenth century, history circulated as printed prose and took the form of narrative, thereby aligning it with the novel. David Hume, in reference to the period's gendered conception of reading preferences, argued that history should appeal to "female readers" because it contains the "intrigues" of sensational fiction.[11] Plutarch's *Lives*, for example, describes murderous revenge and secret love

[10] These titles refer to scrapbooks in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, W.b. 137–256.

[11] David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, edited by Eugene F. Miller, rev. edn (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc, 1987), p. 563.

affairs.[12] Hume claimed that "the first Quality of an Historian is to be true & impartial; the next to be interesting."[13] Such a description positions historians alongside novelists as conveyers of education and entertainment. The way Hume defines historians also resembles George Eliot's description of the realist novel in *Adam Bede*. Midway through the novel, Eliot pauses to put forth two contradictory premises. The first is that art should mirror the world as it is. The second is that the world is impossible to represent accurately. Here, Eliot famously compares her narrative to a Dutch painting and likens her voice to a mirror, engaged in the "faithful representing of commonplace things."[14] Yet with the next sentence, she undermines the novelist's ability to reflect the world perfectly because "the mirror is doubtless defective."[15] As Eliot's example suggests, historians cannot escape their own situated perspective. Moreover, representing historical evidence is always an act of remediation because it is always an act of representation. Walter Scott's novels remediate ballads into dialogue, and George Eliot would remediate historical figures like Savonarola in *Romola* as characters. Once technological advances made it possible, historians like James Orchard Halliwell would try to erase human subjectivity by remediating manuscripts as printed facsimiles. In brief, I argue that the way each writer organized historical extracts—in private collections and published forms—relates to concerns over the nature of authentic historical evidence.

[12] Scholars have begun to analyze Hume as a historian, not just a moral philosopher. See Mark G. Spencer's excellent collection of essays, *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2013). See also Dennis C. Rasmussen, *The Infidel and the Professor: David Hume, Adam Smith, and the Friendship that Shaped Modern Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), especially ch. 4.

[13] David Hume, "Letter 102," in *The Complete Works and Correspondence of David Hume. Electronic Edition*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

[14] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, reprint edn (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), p. 197.

[15] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, p. 193. Eliot's description of her narrator as a mirror recalls Stendhal's description in *The Red and the Black* of the novel as a mirror travelling along a road. For more on Eliot and realism see Peter Brooks's *Realist Vision*, Rosemarie Bodenheimer's *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans*, and George Levine's *The Realistic Imagination*.

Collecting Ballads: Remediating Orality

In a thick, leather-bound quarto secured with a clasp and titled "Common Places 1792,"[16] Walter Scott transcribed the following lines from Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*:

> I do love these ancient ruins.
> We never tread upon them but we set
> Our foot upon some reverend history[17]...

Clearly, Scott identified with the antiquarian pleasure in ancient ruins. On this page, Scott transcribes a scrap of verse, which meditates on past civilizations' fragments. It seems likely that Scott would have been working from this commonplace book when he chose this exact quote as the epigraph for chapter 25 of *The Pirate*.[18] Throughout his life, Scott collected historic scraps, both linguistic and material. His home, Abbotsford, testifies to Scott's love of artifacts or "gabions," as he refers to them in *Reliquiae Trocosienses or the Gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck*. The author accumulated varied extracts—whether sections of verse, fragments of stories, or legal documents from the seventeenth century. His collection begins modestly in two commonplace books from the 1790s, which Lockhart describes as "a most miscellaneous collection, in which there is whatever might have been looked for, with perhaps the single exception of original verse."[19] The *Adversaria*, in particular, matches a description Scott wrote for Frank's commonplace book in *Rob Roy:* both are large, squat objects secured with a clasp, and both contain miscellaneous, disorganized material. This is the reason Frank's father dismisses the collection as a "waste-book," and claims that "all the transactions of the day, emptions,

[16] Abbotsford MS *Adversaria*. For more on the personal aspects of this manuscript, see Lindsay Levy, "Scott's Early Love Poems to Williamina Belsches," *Scottish Literary Review* 3, no. 2 (September 22, 2011).

[17] Sir Walter Scott, *Photocopy of Walter Scott's Adversaria*. The National Library of Scotland, MS 2232. The original is held at Abbotsford.

[18] Sir Walter Scott, *The Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels*, ed. Mark Weinstein and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 12: 237.

[19] John Gibson Lockhart and Sir Walter Scott, *Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (London: A. & C. Black, 1853), p. 200. Lockhart is referring to the Adversaria and a second commonplace book, catalogued by the National Library of Scotland as "Commonplace Book, Bearing the Name Gualterus Scott...." (1803, 1792), MS 1568.

orders, payments, receipts, acceptances, draughts, commissions, and advices, are entered miscellaneously."[20] The motley contents of Frank's collection cannot but remind us of collections like Coleridge's, and the various ways in which the commonplace tradition was becoming more diaristic as readers moved away from strict organizational features like indexing general topics. Nevertheless, ostensibly disorganized collections continued to underpin celebrated published works.

Walter Scott's first major publication, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, exemplifies the author's habits of crafting publications based on his own personal collections of historical materials. His interest in folk traditions began as a boy when he collected cheaply printed ballads. He explains as much in a note written within one of these early bound collections:

> This little collection of stall tracts and ballads were formed by me, when a boy, from the baskets of the travelling pedlars [*sic*]. Until put into its present decent binding, it had such charms for the servants, that it was repeatedly, and with difficulty recovered from their clutches. It contains most of the pieces that were popular about thirty years since [i.e. about 1780], and I dare say many that could not now be procured for any price. 1810, W.S.[21]

Scott's note underscores the ballad's popularity as well as the codex's role in securing them. The note also points out balladeering's ephemerality, and the benefits of a physical collection that protected verse from a dwindling cultural memory—by 1810, Scott suggests, many ballads from around 1780 had disappeared. This fascination with historic ballads continued into his years at university, where he met John Irving, whose mother knew many old ballads. Irving recalls how Scott "used to come and learn those she would recite to him."[22] Lockhart surmises that "these were among the germs of the collection of ballads in six little volumes, which, from the handwriting, had been begun at this

[20] Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, ed. Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 76.
[21] Sir Walter Scott, *Catalogue of the Library at Abbotsford* (Edinburgh: T. Constable, printer, 1838), p. 159.
[22] John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Blanchard, 1837), p. 40.

early period."[23] Lockhart uses the nature of Scott's handwriting to place the volume in his youth—signaling one way in which handwriting conveys information that oral transmission does not.

Orality has long been associated with authenticity. As the last chapter discussed in relation to Faraday's lectures, oral performance allows an audience to observe a text and its author simultaneously. By contrast, written text is not bound to the author's body. And yet, as Paula McDowell has taught us, the very concept of orality did not solidify until it was useful for authors to set it in opposition to print.[24] In other words, our understanding of oral culture is almost entirely dependent upon print. While Romantics associated commonplacing with written texts, it developed within oral culture (the reader might recall how classical orators memorized rhetorical devices and argumentative templates that they might use in any number of contexts). Because commonplacing developed as a mnemonic tool, it fit minstrelsy as well. James H. Jones posits that quatrain ballads, which lack the anchoring force of a refrain, use "a complex and complete system of commonplaces suitable for the presentation of a variety of narrative elements (themes)."[25] Yet even if commonplaces helped minstrels remember ballads, they could not help a society that increasingly turned to print rather than recitation for poetry. Thus, projects like Scott's *Minstrelsy* view publishing ballads as a means of capturing remnants of a lost culture. For example, Scott was the first to publish the ballad "Auld Maitland," which, he writes, was captured from "the recitation" of Mr James Hogg's mother, who had learned the verse from "a blind man, who . . . is said to have been possessed of much traditional knowledge."[26] The ballad relied on a chain of oral transmission that allowed words to continue in verse even as their meaning passed out of common knowledge (not unlike the forgotten origins of commonplaces).

[23] Lockhart, *Memoirs of . . . Sir Walter Scott*, p. 72.

[24] Paula McDowell, *The Invention of the Oral: Print Commerce and Fugitive Voices in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[25] James H. Jones, "Commonplace and Memorization in the Oral Tradition of the English and Scottish Popular Ballads," *The Journal of American Folklore* 74, no. 292 (1961): 100. <https://doi.org/10.2307/537776>.

[26] Sir Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; with a Few of Modern Date, Founded Upon Local Tradition. In Two Volumes* (Edinburgh: J. Ballantyne, 1802), 1: 233

This points to a disconnect between the speaker's knowledge and the information contained in the verse. As Scott notes, the ballad preserves many words that "the reciters have retained without understanding them."[27] Such discordance between content and transmission has made orality a rich subject for media studies. There is a "paradox of orality" as Penny Fielding has explained, because it "guarantees both the purity of origins and the impurity of transmission."[28] To collect ballads in a manuscript collection, whether as scraps of paper bought from travelling peddlers or transcribed from recitation, suggests problems of attribution. Ballads, understood as communal productions, passed down through generations, circulated without an author. For this reason, Romantics were more likely to note where they first encountered a ballad—whether from manuscript, broadside, or "the mouth of a milkmaid." In the case of minstrelsy and ballads, as Maureen McLane has argued, questions of authenticity are questions of media. By definition, oral cultures did not pass down manuscripts for historians to study. Thus, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, discoveries of manuscripts with ancient ballads raised suspicion.

In this respect, the Ossian controversy is exemplary.[29] It began when the Scottish poet James Macpherson claimed that he had found a manuscript with verse from an ancient highlander named Ossian. Macpherson introduced his discovery by foregrounding its fragmented nature: "Though the poems now published appear as detached pieces in this collection, there is ground to believe that most of them were originally episodes of a greater work."[30] This fragmentation appears stylistically as gaps in the text, meant to signal its authentic origins in an ancient manuscript. The editorial voice further interrupts the verse through footnotes that expound upon ancient highland customs or unfamiliar words. The problem, however, was that no such manuscript existed. Samuel Johnson searched the Highlands for it and, finding

[27] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, 1: 233.

[28] Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 53.

[29] McLane writes that Ossian was "a problem of dating and historicizing media—of theorizing oral poetries versus manuscript evidence versus print cultural artifacts." Maureen N. McLane, "Dating Orality, Thinking Balladry: Of Milkmaids and Minstrels in 1771," *The Eighteenth Century* 47, no. 2 (2006): 133.

[30] James Macpherson, "Fragments of Ancient Poetry," accessed September 24, 2019, <http://ossianonline.org/edition/1/fragments-of-ancient-poetry>, p. v.

nothing, he charged Macpherson with inventing the ancient bard. Johnson's need for manuscript evidence is an inheritance of empiricism, and the desire to have physical proof to support historical claims. Of course, Macpherson's invention of a manuscript source came out of the same epistemological impulse. As Johnson pointed out, Macpherson would have done better to claim his sources in oral, rather than manuscript culture. "If he had not talked unskillfully of *manuscripts*, he might have fought with oral tradition much longer."[31] This is questionable considering how the contours of historical authenticity in eighteenth-century Britain depended upon empirical proof.[32] Macpherson was and continues to be a divisive figure.[33] On the one hand, Macpherson clearly invented the ancient highland poet named Ossian. On the other hand, Ossian's epic, *Fingal*, has been applauded for its artistic mastery. Even if it wasn't an authentic text from highland bardic culture, *Fingal* was a best-seller as an ancient epic designed for the eighteenth-century British literary market.

The Ossian scandal continued to inform debates over authenticating oral culture through the Romantic period. For instance, scholars have noted how Thomas Percy's "emphatic promotion of script-based and bibliographic culture" countered Ossianic orality.[34] Romantic paratext surrounding ballads—in manuscript and print—is profoundly concerned with documenting both immediacy and origins. Obviously, neither is possible in the context of ancient ballads; instead of an authorial source, ballad collectors often trusted authentic manuscript evidence, just as Percy had done when he printed his *Reliques* and described the various archives he consulted, including "a small collection of ballads, made by Anthony Wood, in the year 1676" in Oxford's

[31] Johnson to Boswell, 25 February 1775, in *The Letters of Samuel Johnson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 2: 181. For more on Johnson's response to Ossian, see James Boswell and Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London: Penguin UK, 2006), p. 304.

[32] Kathryn Temple, *Scandal Nation: Law and Authorship in Britain, 1750–1832* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), ch. 2. See also Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), esp. ch. 2.

[33] For an overview of current debates on Ossian, see Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[34] Robert Rix, "Thomas Percy's Antiquarian Alternative to Ossian," *Journal of Folklore Research* 46, no. 2 (2009): 197–229.

Ashmolean Library as well as the Antiquarian Society of London's "large folio volumes, digested under the several reigns of Hen viii, Edw. vi, Mary, Elizabeth, James I. &C."[35] However, Percy found most of the *Relique*'s ballads in "an ancient folio manuscript, in the Editor's possession."[36] As added proof of this manuscript's veracity, Percy explains that he showed it to "learned and ingenious friends"[37] who insisted that the selections from the manuscript were not only authentic, but worth publishing.[38] Thus, within the first two pages of his "Preface," Percy defers to material proof of the verse's existence, as well as the opinion of "learned" men.[39] He positions his printed *Reliques* as a proxy for the manuscript, and uses his own proximity to the original to guarantee historical authenticity. It is no wonder, then, that the manuscript developed a legendary status—especially considering that Percy refused to allow other historians to view it. In fact, it remained inaccessible through the 1860s, when Frances Child regrets that he did not have access to the "Percy Manuscript" for his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* because Percy's grandchildren "are not disposed to give it to the world."[40] As Child remarks in a footnote, a published version of the manuscript was in the works. When it was eventually published in 1867, the editors dedicated it to Child for instigating the project. Printing ancient ballads, they claimed, was a matter of posterity, a way to save this ancient tradition from cultural forgetting.

While Percy took care to describe the material conditions of his sources, he also felt perfectly comfortable "updating" ballads—a fact Joseph Ritson pointed out in 1790, when he highlights instances in which "the learned collector has preferred his ingenuity to his fidelity."[41]

[35] Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* . . . (London: Printed for J. G. Fleischer, 1790), p. iv.

[36] Percy, *Reliques*, p. i.

[37] Percy, *Reliques*, p. ii.

[38] Percy's "ancient folio" was actually a seventeenth-century commonplace book, which the editor rescued from a fiery fate. While visiting a friend, Percy saw a maid using old papers to light the fire. Before she could incinerate any more of the manuscript, Percy asked if he could look at it.

[39] Percy concludes his introduction with similar sentiments (see p. vii).

[40] Francis James Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), p. xv. Today the original resides in the British Library (Add MS 27879).

[41] Joseph Ritson and Joseph Frank, *Ancient Songs and Ballads, from the Reign of King Henry the Second to the Revolution* (London: Printed for Payne and Foss, by T. Davison, 1829; original printing 1790), p. xxxi.

Ritson warns readers that they should not accept as authentic any ballad that does not have at least one other source besides Percy's manuscript. For example, Percy begins "The Child of Elle" by explaining that his only source is "a fragment in the Editor's folio MS: which tho' extremely defective and mutilated, appeared to have so much merit." And so, Percy finished the poem, or, more accurately, created a poem around the small fragment. Instead of telling the reader which lines he invented, Percy deflects to modesty. "The Reader will easily discover the supplemental stanzas by their inferiority."[42] Predictably, many antiquarians found Percy's practice dishonest. Frederick James Furnivall artfully writes that Percy "puffed out the 39 lines of the *Child of Elle* to 200."[43] Yet even if he had a different conception of authenticity than Furnivall, Percy was clearly fascinated with the materiality of his manuscripts and situates each ballad in its bibliographical context. For example, after *Childe of Elle*, Percy includes manuscript reference numbers and narrates the look of his manuscripts. McLane helpfully notes how antiquarians like Percy were especially interested in explaining how they found a ballad—often sent by a friend, or read in a manuscript collection held in the Bodleian or the British Museum. Percy, like other ballad collectors, was interested in "chains of antiquarian transmission, not performance occasions."[44] Among the more pointed examples, Percy prefaces the Scottish ballad "Edom O' Gordon" by noting that it "was printed at Glasgow, by Robert and Andrew Foulis, MDCCLV. 8vo. 12 pages." He further adds that he received the verse from "Sir David Dalrymple Bart," who transmitted it to Percy "as it was preserved in the memory of a lady, that is now dead."[45] Clearly, Percy anticipates that his readers will care more about the bibliographic details of the ballad's printing than the name of the woman who performed the ballad for Dalrymple. With his choice of relative pronoun, Percy codes the woman not as a person, but as a thing. Her death is important only insofar as it highlights the near obsolescence of the oral culture Percy was recording.

[42] Percy, *Reliques*, p. 79.

[43] Thomas Percy, John W. (John Wesley) Hales, and Frederick James Furnivall, eds, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript: Ballads and Romances* (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1867), p. xvii. Furnival cites W. S. Blackey's essay on the Folio in the *Contemporary Review* (November 1867) as well as Ritson's *Ancient Songs* (1790), p. xix.

[44] McLane, "Dating Orality," p. 140.

[45] Percy, *Reliques*, p. 86.

Percy's *Reliques* captivated a young Walter Scott, who recalls a summer day spent reading the ballads underneath a platanus-tree. "To read and to remember were in this instance the same thing."[46] From then on, Scott overwhelmed his friends with recitations as he continued to collect ballads. By the time he published *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Scott already had a large supply of ballads at the ready. In addition, he sought assistance in manuscript collections of his contemporaries. For example, Scott used David Herd's "MSS. containing songs and ballads, published and unpublished, to the number of ninety and upwards."[47] Another friend, Alexander Fraser Tytler provided Scott with an additional "two books of ballads, in MS."[48] Yet, as Scott makes clear in his introduction, much traditional poetry perished with "professional ballad reciters" or the shepherds who recalled the "warlike songs of their fathers."[49] Thus, Scott positions orality as at once a mark of authenticity and a threat to preservation. Scott collected ballads in various forms: some he transcribed from word of mouth, a few came from pamphlets, others were given to him in quartos filled with ballads transcribed by others. Now in the National Library of Scotland, Scott's collection has posthumously taken the form of scrapbooks (which serve as our focus in the next section of this chapter).

At the time of his death, the vast majority of Scott's documents remained unbound. It is difficult to reconstruct how these papers would have appeared in the 1830s because, in an attempt to preserve them, librarians bound Scott's documents into large folios. Between 1931 and 1932, the National Library of Scotland purchased the "Abbotsford Collection," which contains well over 1,000 loose papers "found in Scott's desk and cupboards."[50] In the name of preservation, librarians bound Scott's papers into nearly forty folios, each focused on a general topic: for example, they bound 150 ballads into MS 877, titled "Scotch Ballads: Materials for Border Minstrelsy." (See Figure 4.1.) This collection contains material that Scott refers to in his printed collection of ballads. For example, MS 877 includes a printed pamphlet

[46] Quoted in John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of… Sir Walter Scott*, p. 35.
[47] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p. civ.
[48] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p. civ.
[49] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, p. ci.
[50] *National Library of Scotland Catalogue of Manuscripts Acquired Since 1925*, MSS 851–938, Abbotsford Collection (Edinburgh: The Trustees, 1938), p. 109.

FIGURE 4.1 Walter Scott, "Collection of Ballad Scraps," MS 877, F.9. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

of *The Douglas Tragedy* (1792), which Scott published in *Minstrelsy*, along with a headnote pointing out how this particular ballad has been corrupted through cheaply printed "penny pamphlets." He explains that "One of these is now before me, which, among many others, has the ridiculous error of "*blue gilded* horn," for "*buglet* horn."[51] This error, in fact, appears on page three of the pamphlet, now preserved in MS 877. Visible beneath the pamphlet is a manuscript copy of "The Laird of Laminton," followed by "The Laird o' Logie."

Scott continued to receive ballads by mail throughout his life. Just after *Minstrelsy*'s publication, Charles K. Sharpe introduced himself to Scott by letter, offering "enclosed ballads."[52] Sharpe describes how he loved ballads as a child, listening to the "spinsters and knitters in the sun," singing songs that Scott had featured in *Mistrelsy*. Scott replied enthusiastically and concluded his letter: "*Nota Bene.*—Every scrap of legendary intelligence, prosaic or poetical, will be most thankfully received."[53] The language of "scraps" here, as elsewhere, refers to both material and figurative scraps—bits of paper that contain ballads, or fragments of songs.[54]

Scott's "Rebellious Papers"

> Quietly, yet I suspect with great inward enthusiasm and delight, he collected, under particular heads and classes, such extracts or traditions as might afterwards enliven the dark page of history, or give strength, vitality and *vraisemblance* to his original productions, which mere imagination, without learning, could not possibly afford. I cannot say whether the system of common-place book was regularly persevered in; for he had peculiar modes of assisting his memory.[55]

[51] Scott, *Minstrelsy*, 3: 219.

[52] Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe et al., *Letters from and to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and sons, 1888), p. 135. Sharpe's "Collection of songs, and ballads, chiefly Scottish" is housed in the National Library of Scotland, MS 210.

[53] Sir Walter Scott to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, *Letters from and to Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq*, p. 138.

[54] Compare with Halliwell's response to James Child's request for materials with a single line: "I cannot always find time for correspondence though I can always find sufficient of it to enclose a scrap in an envelope." See Houghton MS AM 2349.

[55] Robert Pearse Gillies, *Recollections of Sir Walter Scott, Bart* (London: J. Fraser, 1837), p. 96.

In addition to collecting extracts "under particular heads," Scott amassed troves of documents at Abbotsford. His journal overflows with mentions of "rebellious papers."[56] We find him "adjusting papers,"[57] and setting out "to clear away papers and pack them for my journey."[58] In June 1827, Scott notes that his "Essay on Highlands" was complete but for "want of papers and books to fill up blanks, which I will get at Abbotsford."[59] Scott makes no secret of his distaste for organizing papers:

> I set about arranging my papers, a task which I always take up with the greatest possible ill-will and which makes me cruelly nervous. I don't know why it should be so, for I have nothing particularly disagreeable to look at; far from it....Yet I feel an inexpressible nervousness in consequence of this employment. The memory, though it retains all that has passed, has closed sternly over it; and this rummaging, like a bucket dropped suddenly into a well, deranges and confuses the ideas which slumbered on the mind.[60]

In this entry, Scott confesses to the anxieties of too much information. True to the antiquarian persona he had caricatured, his collection overwhelms its collector.

It would seem that Scott's papers overwhelmed twentieth-century archivists as well. Confronted with the author's "rebellious papers" in the 1930s, librarians decided on the scrapbook as the best form to organize and preserve the author's documents. Such a choice is itself telling. The "book of scraps" had burgeoned into a familiar tradition in the century following Scott's death. As I will discuss later in this chapter, Victorian antiquaries flocked to the scrapbook as an information management system equipped to hold accumulating scraps of cheap newsprint. Thus, early twentieth-century librarians continued the task Scott abhorred and organized his documents. These librarians, however, had the advantage of historical hindsight and arranged loose papers thematically according to Scott's publications with titles such as "Scotch Ballads—Materials for Border Minstrelsy," or "Notes on Napoleon." As the National Library of Scotland's catalogue admits, "it has not...been possible to arrange the collection quite logically," in part

[56] Sir Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. W. E. K. Anderson (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2010), October 12, 1826.
[57] Scott, *The Journal*, January 11, 1828.
[58] Scott, *The Journal*, March 13, 1826.
[59] Scott, *The Journal*, June 28, 1827.
[60] Scott, *The Journal*, March 9, 1828.

because Victorians had already bound together some of these papers.[61] Posthumously, Scott's loose papers became scrapbooks, organized thematically with a list of contents—inspired by the move from a personal to a public archive. Given the early twentieth century's technological capacities, librarians used a typewriter to list the contents, adding yet another medial layer to the collection. Like Coburn's edition of Coleridge's notebooks, the bound collections of Scott's papers rein in the original messiness by imposing traditional structures of commonplacing like thematic groupings and an index.

Consider several pages from the scrapbook titled "Papers on Witchcraft," which contains transcriptions of confessions and trials from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[62] Scott referenced many of these facts in his 1830 publication *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*. MS 905 contains a previously bound quarto, which includes the story of Isobel Gowdie. As Scott would explain in *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Gowdie confessed to witchcraft in 1662. A librarian has written bibliographical information on the sections of *Letters on Demonology* that cover Gowdie: "[See Letters on Demonology, pp. 161–3, 286–292/1830 ed. (Letters v, ix)]." This quarto lies on top of a numbered list of books on witches, ghosts, and magic. This list continues for several leaves, until the number 202. Likely, the "Confessions of Isobell Gowdie" was originally contained as its own sewn gathering, but we cannot be certain because the librarians' organizational efforts obscure this bibliographic data. Clearly, the library organized Scott's papers teleologically, with the clarity of hindsight. While this organizational scheme (thankfully) makes research easier, it obscures the disarray of papers that Scott himself confronted. Scott's rebellious papers reflect the challenges of collecting physical extracts. Even disorganized handwritten notes (like Humphry Davy's) benefit from their grouping within a bound book. Another collector of cuttings, James Halliwell, who I will discuss later in this chapter, managed to assemble several hundred scrapbooks, but he also left behind piles of loose papers that the Folger Library consolidated into forty-three "Scrapboxes."

[61] National Library of Scotland (NLS) Catalogue p. 109. See also Alexander Orrock, Jr, "Report on Arrangement of Abbotsford Papers" (October 1875), NLS MS 1762.

[62] "Papers on Witchcraft," NLS MS 905.

History unfolds as disparate fragments, making the historian's job one of crafting narratives from scraps—a truth that Scott dramatizes in his novels. Consider *The Bride of Lammermoor*, which begins when Dick Pinto, an ill-fated portrait painter, gives the narrator "a parcel of loose scraps, partly scratched over with his pencil, partly with his pen, where outlines of caricatures, sketches of turrets, mills, old gables, and dovecots, disputed the ground with his written memoranda."[63] The story that follows develops as the narrator attempts to "weave" the scraps into a narrative whole.[64] Similarly, Aunt Rachel's commonplace book in *Waverley* contains a motley assortment. We learn of its contents when she transcribes Edward's youthful verses "among choice receipts for cookery and medicine, favourite texts, and portions from High-church divines, and a few songs, amatory and jacobital, which she had caroll'd in her younger days."[65] The narrative positions Aunt Rachel's collection as an archival object that, "the unworthy editor of this memorable history" received along with "other authentic records of the Waverley family."[66] Like Pinto's bundle of papers, Aunt Rachel's commonplace book illustrates how historians depend upon tangible evidence.

Manuscript evidence—like Aunt Rachel's commonplace book—forms the fictive foundation for Scott's historical novels and contributes to what scholars have called the "authenticity effect."[67] Ian Duncan adapts this term to describe how Scott's paratext "advertises a problematical, unstable boundary between history and fiction, evidence and invention, textual surface and ontological depth."[68] These fictional manuscripts, signaling an ironic authenticity, form part of the larger

[63] Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, ed. Fiona Robertson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 25.

[64] Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, p. 24.

[65] Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland and Claire Lamont, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 24.

[66] Scott, *Waverley*, p. 24.

[67] The term originated when James Buzard modified Barthe's "reality effect," to describe touristic desire.

[68] Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 277. Duncan borrows this term from James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Fiona Robertson designates the same material with the term "fictions of authenticity." Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

debate over the relationship between imaginative fiction and historical veracity—a debate Scott's cast of antiquarian characters rehearse. For Duncan, this is part of the "romantic source topoi of *authenticity*" that promises a true history and a living author beneath the fiction.[69] Scott extends this *topos* when, in the *Magnum Opus*, he reveals the true source manuscript behind *Waverley* and how he almost lost it:

> Laid aside in the drawers of an old writing desk, which, on my first coming to reside at Abbotsford, in 1811, was placed in a lumber-garret, and entirely forgotten. Thus, though I sometimes, among other literary avocations, turned my thoughts to the continuation of the romance which I had commenced, yet as I could not find what I had already written, after searching such repositories as were within my reach, and was too indolent to attempt to write it anew from memory, I as often laid aside all thoughts of that nature.[70]

The *Waverley* manuscript, it turns out, has a back-story just as intriguing as the fictional documents strewn throughout Scott's novels—a found object, stuffed into the antiquarian's drawers, along with so many other artifacts.

Scott uses his cast of fictional antiquarians to meditate on the relationship between history and entertainment, truth and fiction. These fusty antiquarians are at once stand-ins for the author himself and familiar character types. Though antiquarianism is central to Scott's works, as Ina Ferris explains, Scott also "distanced himself" from his comedically pedantic figures.[71] These concerns animate *Ivanhoe's* dedicatory epistle written by Laurence Templeton to the Reverend Dr Dryasdust. Here, Templeton offers a theory of the historical novel and claims that an author should "introduce nothing inconsistent with the manners of the age."[72] Choosing words that are intelligible but not overly contemporary proves to be the hardest aspect of writing historical fiction for Templeton. He goes on to reveal the primary source behind *Ivanhoe*—"a singular Anglo-Norman MS" in the possession of

[69] Ian Duncan, "Authenticity Effects: The Work of Fiction in Romantic Scotland," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 1 (2003): 100.

[70] Walter Scott, *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus*, ed. J. H. Alexander, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 12.

[71] Ina Ferris. "Scott's Authorship and Book Culture." In Fiona Robinson, ed., *Edinburgh Companion to Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 12.

[72] Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, ed. Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 21.

Sir Arthur Wardour, another fictive antiquarian introduced in *The Antiquary*. Wardour's vanity makes it so that Templeton can only access the manuscript if he "promised to designate it by some emphatic mode of printing, as **The Wardour Manuscript**; giving it, thereby, an individuality as important as the Bannatyne MS., the Auchinleck MS., and any other monument of the patience of a Gothic scrivener."[73] The font choice in this sentence pokes fun at Wardour's superficial sense of self-importance because, as a parodic antiquary, Wardour believes that black-letter type elevates his name and manuscript. Templeton goes a step further when he juxtaposes the fictional Wardour Manuscript with celebrated, authentic medieval manuscripts (the Bannatyne MS, the Auchinleck MS), thus suggesting a standard of empirically validated evidence within an imaginative narrative (the *topos* of working with an authentic, yet incomplete manuscript). Scott repeats this *topos* when he abruptly ends his novels, blaming the fragmented nature of archival evidence. For example, *Rob Roy* ends with the editorial note, "[Here the original manuscript ends somewhat abruptly. I have reason to think that what followed related to private affairs.]"[74] Similarly, Dryasdust concludes *Redgauntlet* with apologies to the author of *Waverley* that his "anxious researches have neither, in the form of letters, nor diaries, or other memoranda, been able to discover more than I have hitherto transmitted of the history of the Redgauntlet family."[75] Scott's antiquarians construct the fantasy of an original text—one that is simultaneously present and obscured. Visibility, as Ina Ferris has argued, "becomes the special task of historical narrative as a whole."[76] While the historical past is (by definition) not present, *topoi* (like the incomplete manuscript) can make historical fragmentation legible.

Naturally, antiquarian characters like Mr Oldbuck and Dr Dryasdust keep commonplace books. In 1820, the *Ancient Condition of Edinburgh: Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* featured "Extracts from the Commonplace Book of Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck." By way of introduction, the antiquarian's "nephew" explains that he inherited his uncle's collection. He will not reveal said uncle's name, instead, "with

[73] Scott, *Ivanhoe*, p. 22. [74] Scott, *Rob Roy*, p. 452.
[75] Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet* (Paris: A. & W. Galignani, 1824), p. 242.
[76] Ina Ferris, "'Before Our Eyes': Romantic Historical Fiction and the Apparitions of Reading," *Representations* 121, no. 1 (2013): 71.

the permission of the great and unknown novelist,"[77] he chooses to call him Mr Jonathan Oldbuck. Much like the eponymous character from Scott's novel, this antiquarian's library is in "great confusion."[78] The "nephew" finds the antiquarian's commonplace book "locked up in an ancient writing-desk of most curious carving."[79] The magazine then reprints extracts and summaries under headings such as "Adultery" or "Lighting the City." As Oldbuck, *The Antiquary's* character explains, "the abundance of his collection often prevented him from finding the article he sought for: 'Curse the papers!—I believe they make themselves wings like grasshoppers, and fly away bodily—but here, in the meanwhile, look at that little treasure."[80] Even if the eponymous antiquarian struggles to find the exact object he seeks, there is always another "treasure" to capture his attention.

One of Oldbuck's antiquarian friends, Dr Dryasdust, keeps a commonplace book as well. His is another fictive original text—one that helps to deepen this antiquarian's character. Unlike Oldbuck's, Dr Dryasdust's collection takes the form of an entire book, published in 1825 under the title *The Common-Place Book of Literary Curiosities, Remarkable Customs, Historical and Domestic Anecdotes, and Etymological Scraps*. The title page announces the compiler as "The Rev. Dr. Dryasdust of York, somewhile Preface-Writer to the Great Unknown" to emphasize the collection's connection to Scott's published novels.[81] The book features hand-colored illustrations by William Heath and begins with three epigraphs that suggest its rag-picking nature, as well as the editor's own contributions:

> "I am a Gleaner and Disposer of other men's stuff."—*Wolton*.
> Somewhat of mine own.—*Editor*
> Where the Great Harvest has preceded, surely some Gleanings may be found.—*Editor*

[77] "Ancient Condition of Edinburgh," *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* (June 1820): 537.
[78] "Ancient Condition of Edinburgh," p. 538.
[79] "Ancient Condition of Edinburgh," p. 538.
[80] Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 107.
[81] Rev. Dr Jonas Dryasdust (Walter Scott), *The Commom-Place Book of Literary Curiosities, Remarkable Customs, Historical and Domestic Anecdotes, and Etymological Scraps…* (London: John Bumpus, 1825).

Not unlike Coleridge's first edition of *Aids to Reflection*, Scott-as-Dryasdust labels his own entries to mark them as original. Yet, unlike Coleridge, Scott is more concerned with his citations. Similar to other printed commonplace books of the day—and in line with Hume's directive for the historian—the introduction claims that the book is intended to entertain and instruct: "To couple information with anecdote—to blend wit with instruction—to present novelty to his readers where abundance already reigns . . ."[82] Abundance, an echo of humanism's interest in *copia*[83] applies equally to Scott and his extensive collections.[84]

Like his fictive antiquarian characters, Walter Scott surrounded himself with old manuscripts and other historical relics in his faux-medieval castle, Abbotsford. In the final decade of his life, bankrupt and grieving his wife's death, Sir Walter Scott retreated to Abbotsford, where, surrounded by antique armor, rare books, and cabinets full of papers, he set out to write what he called his *Magnum Opus*. This project allowed him to return to his earlier novels and fill them with extensive footnotes and prefatory matter in the hopes that this new edition might cover his debts. He would produce forty-eight volumes, issuing one a month between 1829 and 1833. But, as scholars explain, the *Magnum Opus* was more than a financial endeavor; Scott poured his remaining energy into this work. As a younger man, he had built his Waverley novels on a bedrock of historical research. The *Magnum Opus* cracks open the narrative and makes the historical research visible. It is the work of an avowed antiquarian, and much like the material richness of the Abbotsford collection, his *Magnum Opus* is a narrative of excess. While Scott's novels were never known for seamless narrative, the *Magnum Opus*'s added paratext renders the narrative even more disjointed. Reading the *Magnum's* notes, I imagine Scott sifting through his cabinets, motivated by his desire to make public the troves of research he had accumulated as part of his compositional process.

[82] Dryasdust (Walter Scott), *The Common-Place Book of Literary Curiosities*.

[83] Abigail Shinn and Angus Vine, "Introduction: Theorizing Copiousness," *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 167–182.

[84] For more on British printed commonplace books in this period, see Jillian M. Hess, "British Commonplace Readers, 1706–1879," in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Common Readers*, ed. Jonathan Rose (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 9–29.

Working from an interleaved edition of his novels, Scott wrote out corrections within the printed text and notes on accompanying blank leaves. The result is an intermedial object that physically manifests Scott's signature textual hybridity: filled with verse, epistles, and folklore, these additions give a sense of historical depth. In *Waverley*, for example, when Fergus compares his sister to Conan, who met the devil "blow for blow,"[85] Scott adds a footnote to explain the folklore surrounding this figure. Beginning on the bottom of the recto, Scott directs the note to appear at the chapter's end and titles it "Conan the Jester." He begins, "In the Irish ballads, relating to Fion, [MacPherson's Fingal] there occurs, as in the primitive poetry of most nations, a cycle of heroes, each of whom has some distinguishing attribute." But, Scott did not allot enough space for himself, and the note extends up the page's edge and over to the top, where he concludes, "Sometimes the proverb is worded thus:—'Claw for claw, the devil take the shortest nails,' as Conan said to the devil."[86] The note closes in and, in several cases, intrudes on the following printed page.

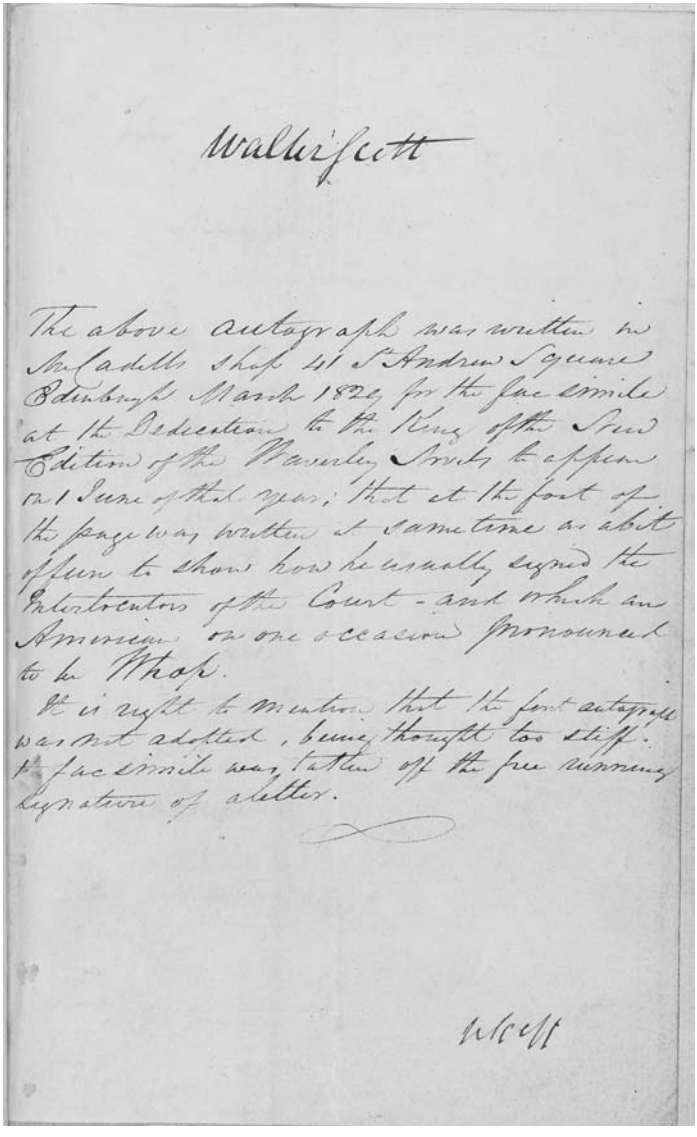
Scott's authorship, long embroiled in questions of authenticity, was never straightforward. "The Great Unknown," cultivated this persona with his publishers' help. The question of authorial authenticity appears pointedly in debates over which of Scott's signatures should appear in the *Magnum*. A tipped in leaf contains two versions of Scott's signature that frame an explanation written by Cadell (see Figure 4.2):

> The above autograph was written in Mr. Cadells [*sic*] shop 41 St Andrew Square Edinburgh March 1829 for the facsimile at the Dedication to the King of the New Edition of the Waverley Novels to appear on 1 June of that year; that at the foot of the page was written at the same time as a bit of fun to show how he usually signed the Interlocutors of the Court and which an American on one occasion pronounced to be Whop.
>
> It is right to mention that the first autograph was not adopted, being thought too stiff. The facsimile was taken off the free running signature of a letter.[87]

[85] Scott, *Magnum Opus*, National Library of Scotland MS 23001, p. 238v. See also Scott, *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus*, ed. J. H. Alexander, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 74.

[86] Scott, *Magnum Opus*, p. 238r.

[87] NLS MS 23001; see also Scott, *Introductions and Notes from the Magnum Opus*, 1: 2.


Walter Scott

The above autograph was written in Mr Cadells Shop 41 St Andrew Square Edinburgh March 1829 for the fac simile at the Dedication to the King of the 2nd Edition of the Waverley Novels to appear on 1 June of that year. That at the foot of the page was written at same time as a bit of form to show how he usually signed the Interlocutors of the Court - and which an American on one occasion pronounced to be Whop.

It is right to mention that the first autograph was not adopted, being thought too stiff. A fac simile was taken off the free running signature of a letter.

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FIGURE 4.2 Cadell's Note on Scott's Signature in the Interleaved Magnum Edition, MS 23001. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Here Cadell explains his thought process as he negotiated authorial representation with all of its complexities. Too polished and a signature looks fake; too sloppy and the name is illegible. As Cadell notes, neither of these signatures appear in the *Magnum Opus*. Instead, he included a facsimile of Scott's signature (inscribed with considerably less self-consciousness) from an old letter. Within his novels, Scott carefully curates his authorial presence in the paratext. Robert Mayer writes that Scott's footnotes "seem to authorize our apprehending the apparatus for the novels in radically different ways: both as a fictionalized extension of a romantic narrative and as a collection of factual material that contains the 'evidentiary base' for the novels."[88] For Mayer and other scholars, Scott's paratext offers the greatest insights into the nature of his authorship and the form of the novel.

Scott's works have fascinated scholars interested in narrative and the history of the novel precisely because of his texts' generic hybridity. As both history and fiction, Caroline McCracken-Flesher argues that Scott's novels deny "readers the luxury of fixed generic systems."[89] Wolfgang Iser also meditates on the space between history and fiction and argues that Scott focuses history's diffuse nature through fictional characters. Scott's novels "create the illusion of historical reality without confining that reality to the illusion he created."[90] One of the ways Scott disrupts his narrative is by destabilizing the authorial figure. For example, Gerard Genette attends to "the paratextual game of imagining the author" in prefatory material attributed to the fictional antiquarians (Dryasdust, Clutterbuck, and Templeton).[91] Scott's "intoxication with incognito, this proof of otherness by identity . . . is a form of extravagant humor," and, Genette claims, "the most fascinating part of Scott's work."[92] Like the prefatory material and footnotes, Scott's epigraphs play with readers' expectations of a true source. Scott confesses,

[88] Robert Mayer, "The Illogical Status of Novelistic Discourse: Scott's Footnotes for the Waverley Novels," *ELH* 66, no. 4 (1999): 925.

[89] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, *Possible Scotlands: Walter Scott and the Story of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 9.

[90] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 100.

[91] Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 284.

[92] Genette, *Paratexts*, p. 288.

"The scraps of poetry which have been in most cases tacked to the beginning of chapters in these Novels, are sometimes quoted either from reading or from memory, but in the general case, are pure invention. I found it too troublesome to turn to the collection of British Poets to discover apposite mottoes."[93] In short, as Ina Ferris comments, Scott's writing takes "the form of re-composition, re-cycling, and collaboration."[94] The qualities that narrative theorists applaud in Scott's novels are similar to what book historians have appreciated in commonplace books and scrapbooks: structural fragmentation, collage-aesthetics, and referentiality.[95] This is not entirely coincidental. The collections of quotations and scraps (Scott's "rebellious papers") that I discussed earlier, while certainly influencing the first edition of the Waverley novels, becomes far more pronounced in the *Magnum Opus*.

The *Magnum Opus*, constructed with interleaved quotations, folklore tales, and antiquarian notes, reveals how the historical novel, as invented by Scott, is structurally indebted to the commonplace tradition. While Scott's work continued to influence Victorian authors, his paratextual apparatus became less visible. The tell-tale signs of commonplacing—epigraphs, footnotes, mixed-genre, poetic interludes, historical digressions—became increasingly less visible with the historical novel of the Victorian period. David Duff provides a useful distinction between "rough-mixing," where genres "clash" through juxtaposition and "smooth-mixing," in which genres blend "seamlessly."[96] While Scott's *Magnum Opus* is obviously an example of "rough-mixing," Victorian novelists were more likely to conceal their historical research under the cover of a "smooth" narrative. Part of Scott's style, as Adelene

[93] Sir Walter Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*, ed. Claire Lamont (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 9.

[94] Ferris, "Scott's Authorship and Book Culture," p. 18.

[95] Hannah Field notes that commonplace books "privilege miscellaneousness and heterogeneity." See Hannah Field, "Amateur Hours: The Visual Interpretation of Tennyson's Poetry in Two Manuscript Albums," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 21, no. 4 (2016): 474. As examples, Field points to Corin Throsby, "Byron, Commonplacing, and Early Fan Culture," in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750–1850*, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 143. See also Robert Macfarlane, *Original Copy: Plagiarism and Originality in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 143.

[96] David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 23; see especially ch. 5.

Buckland has shown, relates to his immersion in geology. Geologists worried over the seductive qualities of a smooth narrative, and, as Walter Scott aligned himself with them, he adopted many of their formal concerns about seamless narratives. Buckland writes, "Scott's ironic, often episodic, loosely plotted narratives… chimed with the geologists' need to narrate geological events without falling victim to the too-seductive machinations of fiction."[97] In the nineteenth century, natural history and literary history overlapped significantly. We know Darwin read Walter Scott's novels obsessively and that George Eliot collected rocks and fossils. In the next section I turn to George Eliot, who assembled commonplace books filled with historical research—one of which, she titled her "Quarry." Yet, unlike Scott, Eliot constructed narratives that obscure the "re-composition" and "re-cycling" of ideas and stories that go into her novels.

Eliot's Quarry

Who can forget the fateful scene in *Middlemarch* when Dorothea meets her future husband, Casaubon? Dorothea's uncle, Mr Brooke, tries to engage the curmudgeonly scholar in conversation and asks one of the period's more vexing questions: "How do you arrange your documents?" Casaubon, we learn, struggles to organize his papers in pigeon-holes and notebooks.[98] But these technologies, as Mr Brooke exclaims, "will not do." Pigeon-holes have a way of mixing up documents while notebooks too often hide extracts in a mass of notes. Dorothea recommends a method for organizing notes: "I would letter them all, and then make a list of subjects under each letter."[99]

[97] Adelene Buckland, *Novel Science: Fiction and the Invention of Nineteenth-Century Geology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 19.

[98] The name "pigeon-hole" derives from actual holes meant to contain pigeons in the sixteenth century; its use as an organizational method for paper slips developed in the seventeenth century. John Locke himself actually meditated on its value in a letter: "Another way may be with pigeon-holes as they call them: at these twenty-four holes, over the first paste an *A*, over the second a *B*,…" See "807. LOCKE to EDWARD CLARKE, [24 January/3 February 1685?] (804, 808)." In *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke: The Correspondence of John Locke: In Eight Volumes, Vol. 2: Letters Nos. 462–848*. Oxford, UK: 1976.

[99] *Middlemarch*, p. 20.

Dorothea's suggestion comes from the history of the commonplace book—her "subjects" correspond to the traditional general heads, which she suggests should be organized in an alphabetical index. While her uncle dismisses the idea of having a "young lady meddle with documents,"[100] Casaubon leaves the dinner determined to make Dorothea his wife and, by extension, the organizer for his notes.

Mr Brooke's question articulates one of George Eliot's lifelong struggles: how do we organize information given the technologies at our disposal? In a letter from 1839, Eliot laments her disorderly mind with the language of geological discourse:

> I have lately led so unsettled a life and have been so desultory in my employments, that my mind, never of the most highly organized genus, is more than usually chaotic, or rather it is like a stratum of conglomerated fragments that shews here a jaw and rib of some ponderous quadruped, there a delicate alto-relievo of some fern-like plant, tiny shells, and mysterious nondescripts, encrusted and united with some unvaried and uninteresting but useful stone. My mind presents just such an assemblage of disjointed specimens of history, ancient and modern, scraps of poetry picked up from Shakespeare, Cowper, Wordsworth, and Milton, newspaper topics, morsels of Addison and Bacon, Latin verbs, geometry, entomology and chemistry, reviews and metaphysics, all arrested and petrified and smothered by the fast thickening every day accession of actual events, relative anxieties, and household cares and vexations.[101]

These fragments show up as extracts in her commonplace book and, ultimately, in her published writings. When she wrote this letter, Eliot was nearly 20 years old, three years after she had begun keeping commonplace books as a student in 1836.[102] Like many characters in the novels she would go on to write, Eliot was searching for a way to transform information into usable knowledge. Eliot's metaphors in this letter, drawn from natural history, lend an organicism to the fragments within her mind. She fears that passing time would leave her thoughts,

[100] *Middlemarch*, p. 20.

[101] September 14, 1839, *The George Eliot Letters*, edited by Gordon Sherman Haight (London: Oxford University Press; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 1: 29.

[102] Eliot's First Commonplace Book, Beinecke Library, Yale University, MS Vault Eliot Box 27.

"petrified and smothered," as it had done to so many former organisms like the "mysterious nondescripts," unidentified species. Here she assembles a disorganized list that juxtaposes literature and geology, Latin verbs and bones. But, as Eliot learns, a somewhat disorganized list can be generative as it forces unlikely connections. Later, in 1855, Eliot writes that she depends upon her notebooks as a crucial aid to memory and regrets not using them more: "I am trying to fix some knowledge about plexuses and ganglia in my soft brain, which generally only serves me to remember that there is something I ought to remember and to regret that I did not put the something down in my note-book. For 'Live and Learn,' we should sometimes read 'Live and grow stupid.'"[103] Once again, Eliot uses scientific language to describe how the very physiology (bundles of nerves and vessels) she tries to understand cannot remember itself (the soft brain composed of plexuses and ganglia). George Eliot's regret over all the information she had lost because she did not enter it into a notebook echoes the resolutions Coleridge, Davy, and Faraday made to rely more heavily on their commonplace books.

During her career as a novelist, Eliot typically devoted an entire commonplace book to research for a specific novel. In this respect, the collection she began in 1855 is unique because she added to it throughout her life —she transcribed the first entry while conceptualizing *Adam Bede* and continued until approximately 1876, after completing *Daniel Deronda*. Totaling 307 pages, this commonplace book was crucial for Eliot's compositional practices because she used it to collect particular information that allowed her to add narrative details and situate characters within a particular time and place. For example, in this commonplace book, Eliot sketches popular country hats from 1773 and 1799.[104] These drawings have an obvious narrative purpose

[103] October 16, 1855, *George Eliot Letters*, 2: 220.

[104] Beinecke Library, MSS 963 IV.10. This particular page is available for view online. George Eliot, "Commonplace Book" (New Haven, 1855–1876), Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, <https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3766836>. For more on this commonplace book, see Joseph Wiesenfarth. "George Eliot's Notes for Adam Bede." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 32, no. 2 (1977): 127–65 and George Eliot. *A Writer's Notebook, 1854–1879, and Uncollected Writings*. Edited by Joseph Wiesenfarth. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981. See also Abbott, "George Eliot, Meter, and the Matter of Ideas," esp. pp. 1183–1185.

because they help Eliot describe historical characters' clothing. Indeed, Eliot's illustrations of a "Fashionable Bonnet in 1799" or "Flat Hat of a country girl, 1773"[105] align with descriptions of Hetty's "straw hat trimmed with white"[106] in *Adam Bede*. Eliot's careful drawings reveal the groundwork behind the novelist's attempt to dress characters in historically accurate clothing. More significantly, she outlines the parameters of characters' lives. Dinah, the female Methodist preacher, would have had a very different life after 1803, when Methodists banned women from preaching;[107] Eliot notes, "Women's preaching: decree of Conference against it, 1803."[108] Part of Eliot's "experiment in life" involved placing individuals within historically specific environments that determine a horizon of possibilities for the kind of story Eliot might tell and the kinds of characters that might populate it.

Eliot employed similar compositional strategies from 1868 to 1872, as she planned and wrote *Middlemarch*. For this project, she worked in three specific commonplace books: she accumulated quotations and hints that inform *Middlemarch* in "Miscellaneous Quotations," "Interesting Extracts,"[109] and, while drafting the novel, she used her "Quarry"[110] from 1871 to 1872. The latter title echoes the geologic metaphors Eliot used to describe her mind—"a stratum of conglomerated fragments"—her "Quarry" becomes a site of narrative excavation, which Eliot used to build a bedrock of historically situated plot. While "Miscellaneous Quotations" and "Interesting Extracts" consist of undigested lists with inchoate connections to the novel, the "Quarry" coalesces around central ideas and plot-points that structure *Middlemarch*. For example, many entries in the first two notebooks build towards suggestive insights—Eliot seems to stumble upon Casaubon's name while thinking about Spenser and Shakespeare:

[105] Eliot, "MSS 963 IV.10," p. 61.
[106] Eliot, *Adam Bede*, p. 274.
[107] Wesleyan Methodist Church Conference, *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the First, Held in London, by the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M., in the Year 1744. [Covering the Conferences of 1744–1824.]*, p. 187.
[108] Eliot, "MSS 963 IV.10," p. 61.
[109] Eliot, "Commonplace Books," Folger M.a. 13–14. For a transcription of M.a. 13, see *George Eliot's Middlemarch Notebooks: A Transcription*, edited by John Clark Pratt and Victor A. Neufeldt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
[110] Eliot's Quarry, Houghton, MS Lowell 13. For a transcription see *Quarry for Middlemarch*, edited by Anna Kitchell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950).

> Thus is my summer worn away + wasted,
> Thus is my harvest hastened all to rathe;
> The eare that budded fayre is burnt and blasted,
> And all my hoped gain is turned to scathe;
> Of all the seede that in my youth was sowne,
> Was naught but brakes + brambles to be mowne.
> —The Shepherd's Calendar

=

Spenser born 1552, twelve years older than Shakspear [*sic*], died 1598–9.

Curious to turn from Shakspeare [*sic*] to Isaac Casaubon, his contemporary.

=[111]

This list forms a chain of historical thinking that places literary extracts within their social context and entwines them in a community of contemporaneous thinkers. Eliot's dashes divide her entries—interestingly, they are the same marks she will use to divide epigraphs from the narrative proper while composing *Middlemarch*, which suggests a formal kinship between notebook and novel. By contrast to "Miscellaneous Quotations," the "Quarry" mentions Casaubon as a character. Here, Eliot reminds herself to develop his relationship with Dorothea,[112] and notes when "Mr. Casaubon makes the arrangements about his will."[113] Yet, even as Eliot relied on commonplace books, she interrogates the tradition's value in *Middlemarch*. Eliot knew that organizing one's notes did not guarantee success; in the novel, she offers Edward Casaubon's as well as Tertius Lydgate's notebooks as cautionary tales.

At the beginning of their marriage, Dorothea begs Casaubon to let her help with "digesting" his "rows of notebooks."[114] She claims, "I will copy out and extract what you tell me: I can be of no other use."[115] Yet, it is only towards the end of Casaubon's life that Eliot grants us a glimpse into the scholar's method for organizing his documents. "In the library, Dorothea observed that he had newly arranged a row of

[111] Eliot, "Miscellaneous Quotations," Folger Shakespeare Library, M.a. 13, p. 160.
[112] Kitchell, *Quarry for Middlemarch*, p. 45.
[113] Kitchell, *Quarry for Middlemarch*, p. 55.
[114] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 200.
[115] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 201.

his notebooks on a table, and now he took up and put into her hand a well-known volume, which was a table of contents to all the others."[116] Casaubon tasks his wife with reading his extracts aloud and marking sections with a cross according to his directions. "This is the first step in a sifting process," Casaubon explains. And, indeed, it is not all that different from Eliot's process, as her commonplace books show her own sifting of information with asterisks and check marks. Most significantly for our purposes, we learn that Casaubon organizes his extracts under "heads." He directs Dorothea to "mark that" or "[p]ass on to the next head."[117] He uses commonplacing to collect and organize evidence for his claims; thus, the sifting process includes finding "adequate, and not disproportionate illustration" for each of his introduction's "theses."[118] Suddenly, after years of carefully recording notes from his studies, Casaubon sees the bigger picture: "Dorothea was amazed to think of the bird-like speed with which his mind was surveying the ground where it had been creeping for years."[119] Her husband digests his notebooks by moving from specific extracts to general arguments. Moreover, Casaubon asks Dorothea to create a list of "illustrations"—or, evidence—for his work. Each might then join to form the "Key to all Mythologies"—Casaubon's lifelong, unfinished project.[120] After his death, Dorothea walks through Casaubon's sepulchral study. It had always seemed a place of lifeless imprisonment; now, the notebooks stood as abandoned tombs.

> . . . The morning gazed calmly into the library, shining on the rows of note-books as it shines on the weary waste planted with huge stones, the mute memorial of a forgotten faith . . . she had carefully ranged all the note-books as she imagined that he would wish to see them, in orderly sequence.[121]

[116] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 477.
[117] Eliot, *Middlemarch,* p. 477.
[118] Eliot, *Middlemarch,* p. 477.
[119] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 477.
[120] Scholars have located Casaubon's work within nineteenth-century debates. For more on Casaubon's relationship to philology, see Seth Lerer. *Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), esp. Ch. 3. For insights into the relationship between Casaubon's character and the field of mythography, see Colin Kidd. *The World of Mr Casaubon*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[121] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 538.

As her final secretarial act, Dorothea assembles Casaubon's notebooks. When she comes upon his index, which he had labeled, "Synoptical Tabulation for the use of Mrs. Casaubon,"[122] she seals it in an envelope and then locks it in her desk, along with a note: "I could not use it. Do you not see now that I could not submit my soul to yours, by working hopelessly at what I have no belief in?"[123] Closing the drawer is another burial. Dorothea's note also rejects *Middlemarch's* first epigraph—"Since I can do no good because a woman, | Reach constantly at something that is near it."[124] Finally, Dorothea lays to rest her role as handmaid to her husband's scholarly ambitions.

Casaubon's notes stand in contrast to Lydgate's. The ambitious country doctor sets out to reform medicine and to find the source of life, the "primitive tissue." Like Casaubon's "Key to All Mythologies," Lydgate's ambitious search for the "primary tissue" ultimately fails. He finds his information not in books, but in experiments. At the end of each day, "he looked at his phials to see how a process of maceration was going on, with undisturbed interest; and he wrote out his daily notes with as much precision as usual."[125] While Dorothea desperately wants to help Casaubon with his research, Lydgate's wife, Rosamond, wishes her husband would put his work away and focus on her. Lydgate's devotion to his work causes a rift in his marriage, and Rosamond complains that he spends more time on his research than with her. She exclaims, "at home you always want to pore over your microscope and vials."[126] Though many have attributed Lydgate's failure to character flaws and an ill-suited marriage, George Eliot's commonplace books reveal a more obscure source: Lydgate's unfortunate placement in the history of science. To create a realistic presentation of Lydgate, Eliot had to collect empirical information about scientific advances in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On September 10, 1869, Eliot writes in her diary that she has accomplished little, "except reading on medical subjects."[127] The books she names—*The Encyclopedia about the Medical Colleges*, Cullen's *Life,* and Russell's *Heroes of Medicine*—are the same ones that she makes extracts from in her commonplace book. Through this research, Eliot

[122] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 539.
[123] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 539.
[124] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 7.
[125] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 272.
[126] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 436.
[127] Eliot, *Journals*, p. 138.

learns about important eighteenth-century physicians, who offered a historical structure on which to assemble Lydgate's character. Bichat, Broussais, and Jenner all appear in the span of a single page.[128] Here, Eliot notes that Broussais worked on fevers, Bichat died young, and Jenner left London to practice medicine in his "native village."[129] These figures allow Eliot to situate Lydgate within a tradition of medicine. We learn from Mr Brooks (the inveterate name-dropper) that when Lydgate studied in Paris, he "knew Broussais."[130] Lydgate, himself, imagined his career along the lines of Jenner's: "he would keep away from the range of London intrigues . . . and win celebrity, however slowly, as Jenner had done by the independent value of his own work."[131] Lydgate's character cannot be understood outside of his historical location. He also exemplifies how Eliot constructed her historical novels with attention to factual details that she recorded in her commonplace books.

For example, Lydgate could not exist without Xavier Bichat, the French scientist who died in 1802. Eliot's notes position Bichat as a central historical figure in her conceptualization of *Middlemarch*. She first references the French doctor in *Miscellaneous Quotations*: "Bichat was born 1771. Seems to have died young (abut. 32). First work Anatomie Generale. 2. Anatomie Descriptive. 3 Recherches . . . sur la Vie et la Mort."[132] This entry reads as a fact-based list of information. Eliot studied Huxley's "Cell Theory," and made extracts focused on Bichat's life and works. Lydgate's character emerged out of this historical research, and the way Eliot frames his historical moment mirrors Huxley's characterization of Bichat, which she had transcribed under the heading "Bichat's Work."[133] This Huxley extract considers two central concepts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century physiology: first, that living matter is composed of "a comparatively small number of structural elements," and second, that these elements "possess vital properties." Huxley goes on to celebrate Bichat as the mind behind these two theories, writing: "It required all the genius of Bichat to sift the wheat from the chaff amongst the great mass of facts which the

[128] Eliot, *Miscellaneous Quotations*, p. 112.
[129] Eliot, *Miscellaneous Quotations*, p. 112.
[130] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 92.
[131] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 145.
[132] "Miscellaneous Quotations," p. 112.
[133] This extract comes from Huxley's "Cell Theory." Kitchell notes that Eliot read this work in *British and Foreign Medical and Chirurgical Review* 12 (1853): 285–314.

observation of past ages had accumulated—& strengthening whatever place was weakest by new investigations—to establish these very two propositions . . . ."[134] In her commonplace books, Eliot refrains from synthesizing entries; instead she structures them as lists, and waits to fold them into the novel's narrative. The novelist's lists reflect her period's fascination with collecting specimens of natural history—fossils, feathers, and the remains of previous civilizations. Scientists attempted to understand the world by accumulating particulars from which they could build larger narratives of development. By the time Eliot began the *Quarry* she had subsumed Bichat's story into a larger narrative of scientific development; thus, the fly-leaf contains Bichat's name and the years of his life (1771–1802) surrounded by the names and dates of other important physicians and scientists (from Vasalius, born in 1532, to Galvani, who died in 1798). (See Figure 4.3.) As Jeremy Tambling points out, Bichat "turns out to be a highly overdetermined figure in his functions in *Middlemarch*" and Lydgate's failure is "generational" because he cannot advance his medical practices beyond Bichat's outdated episteme.[135]

Bichat's method becomes Lydgate's in *Middlemarch* as the novel uses the French scientist's work to set up Lydgate's historical environment. The way that Eliot presents Lydgate and, by extension, the world of medicine that he inherits is informed by Eliot's notes on Bichat. The first thing we learn about Bichat is that he did not live long—he "died when he was one and thirty."[136] Even so, he opened up a new way of looking at physiology:

> That great Frenchman first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs—brain, heart, lungs, and so on—are compacted . . .[137]

[134] Kitchell, *Quarry for Middlemarch*, p. 20.

[135] Jeremy Tambling, "Middlemarch, Realism and the Birth of the Clinic," *ELH* 57, no. 4 (1990): 939–960, p. 941. Lydgate's narrative dependence upon Bichat also confirms Sally Shuttleworth's insight that Eliot engaged deeply with scientific thought. See Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[136] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, pp. 147–148.

[137] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 148.

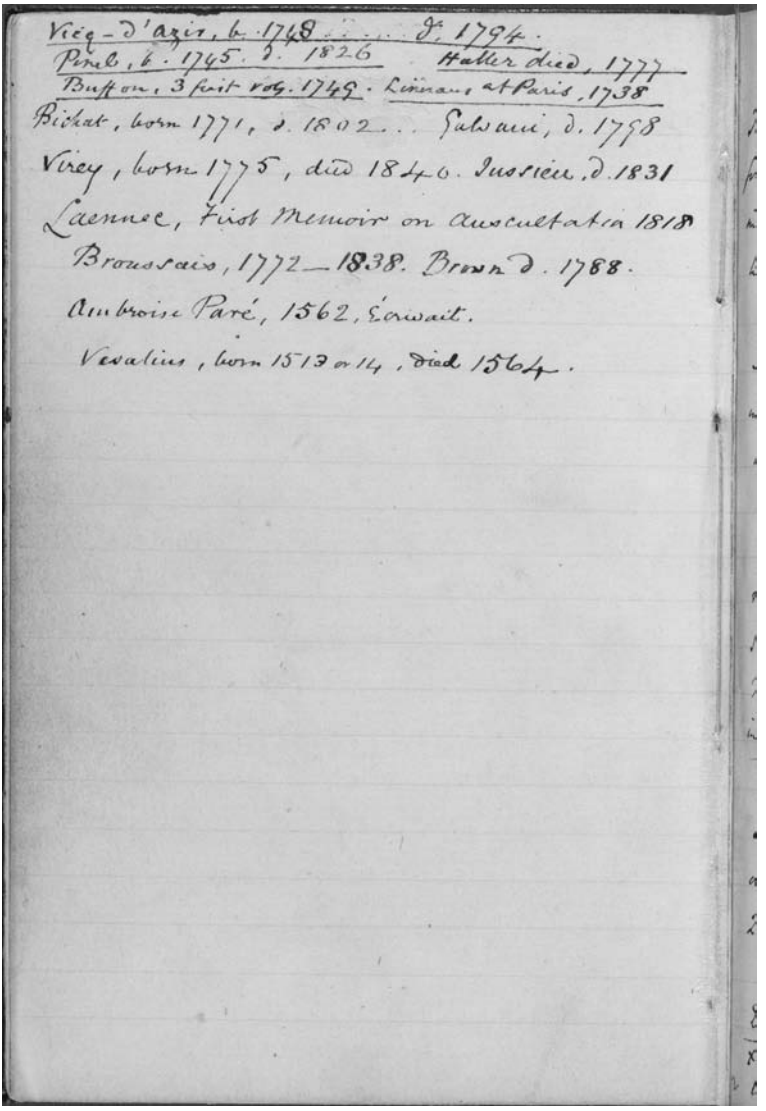

Vicq-d'azir, b. 1748 . . . . d. 1794.
Pinel, b. 1745. d. 1826
Haller died, 1777
Buffon, 3 fait voy. 1749. Linnaeus at Paris, 1738
Bichat, born 1771, d. 1802 . . Galvani, d. 1798
Virey, born 1775, died 1846. Jussieu, d. 1831
Laennec, first Memoir on Auscultation 1818
Broussais, 1772—1838. Brown d. 1788.
Ambroise Paré, 1562, Edinb.
Vesalius, born 1513 or 14, died 1564.

FIGURE 4.3 Eliot puts Bichat into a Chronology of Medical Research in the "Quarry for *Middlemarch*." MS Lowell 13. Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The "webs" or "tissues" in Eliot's description derive from what Huxley had called "structural elements." Though Eliot copied Huxley's words into the *Quarry*, she revised his diction to suit *Middlemarch*'s central metaphors. Bichat's conclusion—that tissues form the building blocks of life—leads to Lydgate's search for the "primary tissue," precisely because this is where Bichat's work had left off. As Avrom Fleishman remarks, "One must submit that it is precisely imagination that he lacks: having learned about tissues from Bichat, he seeks yet another tissue, a primary one, instead of going outside or beyond that framework to seek a more elementary constituent or unit of tissue."[138] Lydgate's lack of imagination notwithstanding, his moment in history also made progress difficult.

Lydgate's historical position is tragic, of course, because Eliot placed him at the precipice of the cell's discovery. By the end of the 1830s, scientists were able to identify the cell as the building block of nature after Schleiden's and Schwann's research (Schwann's *Microscopical Researches* was published in 1839).[139] The microscope developed slowly from the seventeenth century (in 1674, Antony van Leeuwenhoek refined the instrument so that he could see microorganisms in a sample of lake water) to the mid-nineteenth century, when scientists would use it to diagnose human ailments. Lydgate, we learn, is enthralled by new technologies and relies on the microscope, which "research had begun to use again with new enthusiasm of reliance."[140] As we have seen, Eliot carefully outlined this historical narrative in her *Quarry*. Anna Kitchell, in her study of the *Quarry*, suggests that Eliot might have learned this history from the *Encyclopedia* because on September 10, 1869, she notes in her journal, "reading on Medical Subjects—Encyclopedia about the Medical Colleges."[141] Lydgate exists within a period of empirical fascination—as scientists and amateurs alike thrilled at the new possibilities for observing the physical world. Mr Farebrother, for example, comes to Lydgate's rooms with "some pond-products which . . . [he]

[138] Avrom Fleishman. *George Eliot's Intellectual Life*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.170.

[139] See Denise Gigante, *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 37. See also Fleishman, *George Eliot's Intellectual Life*, p.168.

[140] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 149.

[141] George Eliot, *George Eliot's Life as Related in her Letters and Journals* (W. Blackwood and Sons, 1885), p. 99.

wanted to examine under a better microscope than his own"—a scene that recalls Leeuwenhoek's discovery of microorganisms in pond water with his seventeenth-century microscope. Lydgate's narrative is built from the history of empirically based science. His tragedy, then, is one of historical location. Lydgate, though positioned to discover the cell, does not have the necessary technology. Instead, he is repeating experiments from the seventeenth century with Farebrother.

Middlemarch's first readers in 1871, however, had the benefit of historical hindsight. They would know about past scientific developments and the discovery of the cell, just after Lydgate's time. The narrative slyly recognizes this common knowledge: "What was the primitive tissue? In that way Lydgate put the question—not quite in the way required by the awaiting answer; but such missing of the right word befalls many seekers."[142] Cell-theory was waiting for Lydgate, though he called it by the wrong name. Eliot presents Lydgate's question only to undermine it with knowledge that would become apparent in the next decade. True to form, characters' experiences demarcate the limits of empirical knowledge in *Middlemarch*.[143] Ultimately, Lydgate could never know more than his experiences allowed him to know. And, because experience relies in large part upon historical location, Lydgate's story presents a tempered look at discovery and revelation. The country doctor's disappointment illustrates how knowledge is circumstantial and delimited not only by personal experience, but by historical location. Few can know more than his or her society knows.

The historical fact of the cell's discovery might have been suitable material for a footnote were Scott writing *Middlemarch*, but Eliot is less interested in pulling readers out of the narrative proper by flagging historical facts. Rather, Eliot offers history as a series of conceptual fragments, circumscribed by the limits of human knowledge. In this way, Buckland explains, "Eliot's writing is often geological writing, haunted by the problems of evidence and a long-dead past."[144] Such problems of historical evidence were at once amplified and quelled with

[142] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p. 148.

[143] This is part of realism's distrust of individual perspectives, and a larger issue of empiricism in the period. For more, see Rothfield, *Vital Signs*, especially ch. 4 and Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[144] Buckland, *Novel Science*, p. 246.

a rapid succession of new technologies that made historical empiricism possible. Natural historians, for instance, were increasingly drawn to visual evidence, which, in many cases, not only interrupted, but superseded narrative. Many historians argued that images offered better evidence than a string of seductive paragraphs. This chapter concludes with one such historian, the Shakespearean scholar James Orchard Halliwell, who conducted archeological digs in Stratford-upon-Avon and collected priceless cuttings from early modern manuscripts and printed books.

Scrapbooks, Scrapboxes, and Historical Empiricism

Although Johnson searched for the errant Ossian manuscript in the 1770s, a bit later in the century, scholars would learn that even the presence of a manuscript did not guarantee authenticity. To the contrary, proliferating facsimile evidence also set up an environment rife with forgery. Once Edmund Malone published Shakespeare's signature in his 1790 edition,[145] the bard's autograph seemed to appear in everyone's attic. Because readers could copy Shakespeare's true signature with tracing paper, forgeries increased. Famously, the teenager William Henry Ireland claimed to have found the bard's signature while rummaging through an old trunk in 1795. He continued to imitate Shakespeare's signature and pass off his own verse as the great poet's, which culminated in a forged play, *Vortigern*. Though Ireland insisted it came from Shakespeare's pen, *Vortigern* received scathing reviews, and by 1796 Ireland confessed in *An Authentic Account of the Shakesperian Manuscripts* and asked forgiveness, noting that the forgeries were only "an act of a boy."[146] Malone suspected Ireland's documents from the beginning, claiming that he had seen so much of the archive, it was

[145] See Margreta De Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[146] William Henry Ireland, *An Authentic Account of the Shaksperian Manuscripts, &c* (London: J. Debrett, 1796), p. 1. For a riveting retelling of Ireland's story and how easily he fooled a public eager for new information about Shakespeare, see Doug Stewart, *The Boy Who Would Be Shakespeare: A Tale of Forgery and Folly* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010).

unlikely he would have overlooked so much. Malone followed up on his accusation with a lengthy investigation into Ireland's materials, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments*. As proof, he provided an overwhelming number of "genuine signatures" from early modern manuscripts. The controversy of the 1790s would recur in the 1850s with John Payne Collier's Perkins folio. As a respected Shakespearean scholar, Collier convinced readers that he had discovered an edition of Shakespeare's works with emendations purportedly done in the seventeenth century by the "Old Corrector." (They were later proven to have been written by Collier himself.) To say that Collier's forgeries marred his reputation is not to deny his brilliance as a scholar; also a businessman, he saw an opportunity to make money and took it. Collier was an early adopter of Victorian technologies. In 1858, he helped to produce the first facsimile edition of a Shakespearean artifact with the Duke of Devonshire copy of the First Quarto. As Alan Galey points out, this facsimile was misleading because the text it presented did not actually exist. Rather, he offered a "hybrid of both surviving copies of Q1."[147] Yet again, authenticity and forgery appeared knit together. Galey, pointing to Collier's example, asks, "Should it surprise us that an early pioneer in the application of imaging technologies to rare books was also an expert in the construction of history via material interventions into documents?"[148]

Collier's forgeries—as well as Macpherson's and Ireland's—sprang from a larger cultural fascination with historical fragments. This fraudulent empiricism, however, also necessitated a discourse on authenticity as historians wondered how to prove that their materials were in fact originals. Halliwell's archeological method hinged on amassing a collection of facsimiles and originals. Like the archeologist in the field, he relied on the presence of original materials or, at the very least, facsimiles of them. Halliwell's pursuit of material was unusual even by nineteenth-century standards: he supervised archeological digs in the hope of finding Shakespeareana.[149] While digging around New House,

[147] Alan Galey, *The Shakespearean Archive: Experiments in New Media from the Renaissance to Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 141.

[148] Galey, *Shakespearean Archive*, p. 141.

[149] For more on Halliwell's archeological digs, see Paul Edmondson and William Mitchell, *Finding Shakespeare's New Place: An Archaeological Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Halliwell found a knife. He boasted that this was "the only personal relic . . . possessing strong claims to have belonged to the house in the poet's lifetime . . . ."[150] Thus, the story that Halliwell would tell was one premised upon the artifacts in his collection. Rich theorizations of collecting—from Baudrillard to Benjamin—helps us understand Halliwell's personal relationship with his archive.[151] Through his collection, Halliwell narrates not only a history of Shakespeare's England, but his own authority as a Shakespearean scholar in possession of more archival materials than any other individual. Many of his prefaces explain that his work developed through "the gradual collection of facsimiles of every document of any real importance respecting Shakespeare."[152] But he was also interested in original objects. In 1855 he wrote, "It is of such immense importance to me to have the early quarto Shakespeares in my own hands for collation," and claimed that he was willing to pay "the wildest prices" for it.[153]

Halliwell has been called antiquarianism's Mozart because of his precocious talent for collecting and studying rare books.[154] At the age of 19, he already considered himself an expert and published *A Few Hints to Novices in Manuscript Literature* (1839), in which he reveals great plans for himself and advises readers to watch for new publications such as his "treatise on Paleography."[155] According to many accounts, Halliwell's extreme bibliophilia tended towards larceny. In 1845 the British Museum banned him for "abstracting" several manuscripts from Trinity College, Cambridge, which ended up in the

[150] James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *An Historical Account of the New Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Last Residence of Shakespeare* (London: J. E. Adlard, 1864), p. 165.

[151] Jean Baudrillard reminds us that an object within a collection sheds its original meaning and becomes something else. Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (London: Reaktion Books, 2004). And Walter Benjamin claims "ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them." Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library," *Illuminations* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 67.

[152] James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *A New Boke about Shakespeare and Stratford-on-Avon* (London: for private circulation, 1850), pp. v–vi.

[153] Halliwell to David Laing, 25 November 1869. University of Edinburgh Archive and Manuscript Collections (La.IV.17 fols 4235–4236).

[154] Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 283.

[155] James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *A Few Hints to Novices in Manuscript Literature* (London: T. Rodd, 1839), p. 11.

Museum's Edgerton Collection by way of the bookseller Thomas Rodd. The Museum eventually dropped charges, but Halliwell's innocence remains debatable.[156] Unsurprisingly, he earned many enemies, including his future father-in-law, Sir Thomas Phillipps, a self-described "vello-maniac" and respected antiquarian who had discovered Shakespeare's marriage license bond earlier in the century.[157] Well acquainted with the ambitious young scholar's reputation, Phillipps tried to persuade his daughter to call off the engagement by sending vicious letters proclaiming that she shouldn't "expect any blessing" from him.[158] Henrietta, née Phillipps, married the ambitious young scholar anyway. Befitting Halliwell's eccentric character, he appended his wife's maiden name to ensure her inheritance, publishing his later works under the extended name James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps.[159]

Halliwell's passion for material history primed him to embrace the developing field of archeology. As a member of the Archeological Society, Halliwell called his method "archeological" and included "archeological annotations" in his publications—he read through governmental archives and dug up the earth beneath Stratford-upon-Avon. His archeological method included spending months combing through the archives in Stratford, the Chapter House in Westminster, and parish registers of various hamlets, reading anything related to the Shakespeare family. With this research, he completed his first major biography in 1848, ambitiously titled *The Life of William Shakespeare: Including Many Particulars Respecting the Poet and his Family Never Before Published*.

Much of Halliwell's evidence comes from his practice of cutting up old books and arranging them in hundreds of scrapbooks. And so it

[156] For more on the Cambridge Manuscript affair see A. N. L. Munby, *The Formation of the Phillipps Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951–1956), 2: 37–53. Munby includes a copy of the letter in which Halliwell tried to sell these manuscripts privately to Phillipps (39–40). Also, see Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 282–288; and Marvin Spevack, "James Orchard Halliwell and the British Museum Library," *British Library Journal* (1997): 250.

[157] For more on Phillipps's biography and collection, see Munby, *Phillipps Library*.

[158] Quoted in Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, p. 288. Munby writes that Phillipps was enraged to learn that "his daughter had married a thief—a thief of MANUSCRIPTS…" (*Phillipps Library*, 4: 168).

[159] Stuart Sillars, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 32.

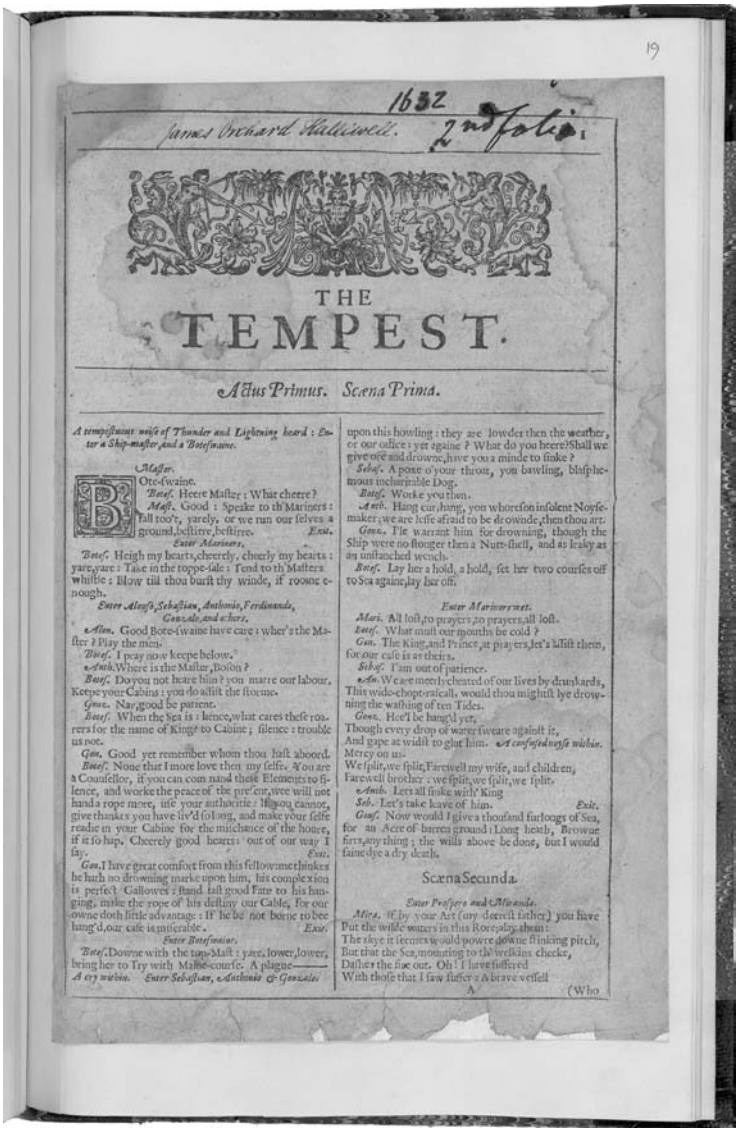
should not be (entirely) surprising to find a page cut from Shakespeare's second folio pasted into Halliwell's scrapbook, with the scholar's notes written upon the page (Figure 4.4). Halliwell signed his name, in a controlled hand, marking his ownership, like an artist signs a work of art or an explorer sets down a flag. On the top right corner, he dated the print (1632) and noted that it came from the Second Folio. Halliwell's claim to ownership bleeds through to the back of the page, which displays a blotchy mirror image of his notes. He pasted only one side to his scrapbook so that readers could flip it as though it were still in its original binding. Halliwell's markings convey a tactile connection to the page, a topophilia that maps a cultural history onto the folio. Halliwell could write on this leaf because he owned it, a practice we might recognize in libraries that stamp their names on valued books. Marks of ownership like these confirm that a rare book is an object, a commodity, and ultimately saleable.[160] When Sotheby's posthumously catalogued Halliwell's collection, more than a few descriptions acknowledged and then dismissed the marks of his scholarship, whether by pen or scissors: "Although a few head-lines are cut into at the commencement of this volume, it may fairly be regarded as an unusually fine and perfect copy…"[161] Bibliophiles, like Halliwell, loved books as physical things, and like other forms of love, it often turned possessive.[162] By marking his collection, Halliwell claimed the cultural capital endowed in his rare books, and by crafting a narrative around them in his published works, he secured his place in the history of Shakespearean studies.

Victorians loved their books to pieces and Halliwell was perhaps the greatest book-tearer of them all. With their presence, early modern scraps offered an opportunity to empirically study an artifact from

[160] For more on readers writing in valuable Shakespearean books, see Jean-Christophe Mayer, "Rewriting Shakespeare: Shakespeare's Early Modern Readers at Work," *Études Épistémè* 21 (April 1, 2012).

[161] *A Few Notes on a Selected portion of the Halliwell-Phillipps Library: which will be sold by auction at Messrs. Southeby's in June, 1889.* Houghton Library, Harvard University, GEN B 1636.11.11, 14.

[162] In Halliwell's propensity to cut up manuscripts in the name of bibliophilia, we might observe the "love of literature" of which Deidre Lynch writes: "Book love so practiced shocked, because it betrayed the lovers' propensities for book destruction." See Deidre Shauna Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 140.


19

James Orchard Halliwell. 1632 2nd folio.

THE
TEMPEST.

Actus Primus. Scæna Prima.

A tempestuous noise of Thunder and Lightning heard: Enter a Ship-master, and a Boteswaine.

Master.

Boteswaine.

Bote. Heere Master: What cheere?

Mast. Good: Speake to th'Mariners: fall too't, yarely, or we run our selves a ground, bestirre, bestirre. *Exit.*

Enter Mariners.

Bote. Heigh my hearts, cheerely, cheerely my hearts: yare, yare: Take in the toppe-sale: Tend to th'Masters whistle: Blow till thou burst thy winde, if roome enough.

Enter Alonso, Sebastian, Anthonio, Ferdinando, Gonzalo, and others.

Alon. Good Boteswaine have care: where's the Master? Play the men.

Bote. I pray now keepe below.

Ant. Where is the Master, Boson?

Bote. Do you not heare him? you marre our labour, Keepe your Cabins: you do assist the storme.

Gon. Nay, good be patient.

Bote. When the Sea is: hence, what cares these roarers for the name of King? to Cabine; silence: trouble us not.

Gon. Good yet remember whom thou hast aboord.

Bote. None that I more love then my selfe. You are a Counsellor, if you can command these Elements to silence, and worke the peace of the present, wee will not hand a rope more, use your authoritie: If you cannot, give thankes you have liv'd so long, and make your selfe readie in your Cabine for the mischance of the houre, if it so hap. Cheerely good hearts: out of our way I say. *Exit.*

Gon. I have great comfort from this fellow: methinkes he hath no drowning marke upon him, his complexion is perfect Gallowes: stand fast good Fate to his hanging, make the rope of his destiny our Cable, for our owne doth little advantage: If he be not borne to be hang'd, our case is miserable. *Exit.*

Enter Boteswaine.

Bote. Downe with the top-Mast: yare, lower, lower, bring her to Try with Maine-course. A plague——— *A cry within. Enter Sebastian, Anthonio & Gonzalo.*

upon this howling: they are louder then the weather, or our office: yet againe? What do you here? Shall we give o're and drowne, have you a minde to sinke?

Seba. A pose o'your throat, you bawling, blasphemous incharitable Dog.

Bote. Worke you then.

Ant. Hang cur, hang, you whoreson insolent Noyse-maker; we are lesse afraid to be drowned, then thou art.

Gon. Ile warrant him for drowning, though the Ship were no stronger then a Nut-shell, and as leaky as an unstanched wench.

Bote. Lay her a hold, a hold, set her two courses off to Sea againe, lay her off.

Enter Mariners wet.

Mari. All lost, to prayers, to prayers, all lost.

Bote. What must our mouths be cold?

Gon. The King, and Prince, at prayers, let's assist them, for our case is as theirs.

Seba. I am out of patience.

Ant. We are merely cheated of our lives by drunkards, This wide-chopt-rascall, would thou might'st lye drowning the washing of ten Tides.

Gon. He'el be hang'd yet,
Though every drop of water sweare against it,
And gape at widst to glut him. *A confused noyse within.*
Mercy on us.
We split, we split, Farewell my wife, and children,
Farewell brother: we split, we split, we split.

Ant. Let's assist with' King

Seb. Let's take leave of him. *Exit.*

Gon. Now would I give a thousand furlongs of Sea, for an Acre of barren ground: Long heath, Brownе furze, any thing; the wills above be done, but I would fainе dye a dry death.

Scæna Secunda.

Enter Prospero and Miranda.

Mira. If by your Art (my dearest father) you have
Put the wilde waters in this Roare-alay them:
The skye it seemes would powre downe stinking pitch,
But that the Sea, mounting to th'welkins cheeke,
Dashes the fire out. Oh! I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: A brave vessell

A (Who

FIGURE 4.4 Cutting from the Second Folio in Halliwell's Scrapbook [V.b. 36]. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Shakespeare's time through direct observation. As Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley explain, the object's physical existence supports archeological research as "this presence constitutes the object's authority, its authenticity."[163] Because scholars could observe, measure, and analyze them, material remnants became the field's central evidence. Indeed, Charles Lyell pointed out that geologists could actually measure time, a formerly elusive construct, because time's passing marked geologists' and archeologists' objects. Archeological digs proved that while the past remained in large part inaccessible, its fragments offered a partial experience. Archeological findings granted a writer agency to make historical claims; of course, in doing so the historian transformed the archeological object, loading its presence with past and present utility. Pierre Bourdieu reminds us how deeply interwoven collecting is with power structures; when discussing quotation, he explains that it is "a quite special use of discourse which is a sort of summons to appear as advocate and witness, addressed to a past author on the basis of a social solidarity disguised as intellectual solidarity."[164] Halliwell took this a step further by reproducing not only the author's words, but also authentic artifacts surrounding the author's life. As a collector, Halliwell leveraged his archive to authorize his histories.

Halliwell brought the bard back to earth, venerating the ostensibly mundane objects of early modern daily life. In *Outlines* (his final hagiographic biography) he explained: "No journey is too long, no trouble too great, if there is a possibility of either resulting in the discovery of the minutest scrap of information respecting the life of our national poet, or of materials that throw light upon the contemporary drama and the usages of the ancient stage."[165] Describing his search for the "minutest scrap," Halliwell used the language of expedition and discovery. Like Pitt Rivers and other archeologists, he believed that fragments long buried and forgotten in the earth might open a new trove of information. Archeology based its conclusions on tactile objects and engaged new technologies (such as photography)

[163] Michael Shanks and Christopher Y. Tilley, *Re-Constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 75.

[164] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 73.

[165] James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Printed for the Author's Friends, 1881), 1: xix.

to reproduce artifacts. In the words of Allan Sekula, photography became "central to a bewildering range of empirical disciplines ranging from art history to military intelligence."[166] Halliwell was poised to capitalize on photography's potential. His collections from the 1850s demonstrate that he already viewed his scraps as evidence before he could accurately and cheaply print them. Through all his reading and research, Halliwell accumulated an overwhelming supply of miscellaneous material. But before he could write his histories, Halliwell had to organize his archive.

Halliwell's marks of ownership were decisive and permanent, and he wrote upon almost every scrap he collected. Often, he noted the cutting's source, given his scissors' erasure of identifying bibliographic material. Many scraps also bear a keyword, and Halliwell underlined each instance of the word's appearance in the original text. Then he stored his cuttings in boxes and safes sorted by keyword, and finally he chose the best cuttings to paste into his scrapbooks. In many instances the breadth of Halliwell's scraps exceeds the ambition of his scholarship. The scrapbook was one of the best information management tools the Victorians had, even if it often seemed insufficient to handle the prodigious bulk torn from rare books and manuscripts that "literally stuff the volumes of the scrapbooks."[167] He accumulated so much material that sometimes he affixed multiple scraps to a page with small nails and yet he still had over a thousand loose scraps left over, which the Folger Shakespeare Library stores in "scrapboxes."

In the 1850s Halliwell began preparing his lavish folio Shakespeare. In the process, he pillaged early books and manuscripts for examples of distinctive words he planned to annotate and labeled each cutting with the name of its associated play.[168] For example, his cutting from the 1562 text *The Castell of Memory* features Halliwell's handwritten markings identifying the text that the cutting came from as well as the play he associated it with. This cutting explains remedies to strengthen memory including Ophelia's choice (rosemary), so he underlined the keywords "memorie" and "rosemarye" for her "There's rosemary for remembrance" speech. Like this one, each scrapbook page nests

[166] Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (December 1, 1986): 57.
[167] Alan Somerset, "Review," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (July 1, 2003): 223–226.
[168] These scrapbooks are housed at the Shakespeare Centre Library in Stratford.

multiple archives, one placed within the other because the texts Halliwell cut from were already miniature archives with their own system for collecting and organizing information. The archive, as he found it, was incomplete and therefore fluid, changing form and content continuously. As Arlette Farge writes, the historian uses "the archives as a vantage point from which she can bring to light new forms of knowledge that would otherwise have remained shrouded in obscurity."[169] Whatever one might think of Halliwell's method, he saved thousands of scraps from obsolescence by enfolding them within his own historical narrative. His handwriting, interwoven with sixteenth-century printed text, quite literally demonstrates how "the archival body has always been co-written,"[170] as Wolfgang Ernst puts it. Halliwell takes the bibliophile's fantasy of holding rare books in one's hands to the extreme: he also cut them and wrote upon them.

Concurrently, Halliwell collected several manuscript commonplace books from Shakespeare's time, and includes many cuttings from one of them throughout these scrapbooks. Nested among cuttings from rare, printed books, Halliwell pasted a reader's contemporary record of Shakespearean lines.[171] As was the norm, this compiler grouped quotations according to traditional general topics, which Halliwell disregarded, rearranging excerpts according to his own chosen organizational methods, based primarily on Shakespearean plays or aspects of the bard's biography. Accordingly, he juxtaposed cuttings related to the same play rather than abstract themes typical of commonplace books compiled several centuries earlier such as "Remembring" (sic), the anonymous compiler's heading. Presumably, this quotation originally appeared juxtaposed with other extracts related to memory, but Halliwell filed it under *Hamlet*. Cuttings from this commonplace book highlight the scrapbook's inter-medial nature, as it collects information from Shakespeare's world to the Victorians'. This particular quotation aligns several technologies of memory: it derives from an early-modern

[169] Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 54.

[170] Wolfgang Ernst, *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), p. 35.

[171] For more on these cuttings and their possible connection to a commonplace book at the Folger Shakespeare library, see Gunnar Sorelius, "An Unknown Shakespearian Commonplace Book," *The Library* 5–XXVIII, no. 4 (1973): 294–308.

commonplace book, Halliwell pasted it into his scrapbook, and the quotation mentions yet another tool, the "table of my memory," a reference to the table-book. The scrapbooks' cuttings from early modern texts reveal an inherent tension among different technologies of organization. The functionality of these scraps, for example, shifted from a piece of advice about memory to evidence for a literary argument. Juxtaposing print and manuscript culture, pages like this one foreground the displaced nature of the early printed book (its binding or paratext), erased from Halliwell's collection. By rearranging these fragments, he claims the power to conceptually and physically re-frame them as historical evidence.

Captivated by his archive, Halliwell claimed he would have printed only facsimiles if his publishers allowed a book without a "consecutive narrative."[172] Halliwell's historiography had come a long way from Walter Scott's narratives. Rather than telling history as a story, Halliwell wanted to tell it as a series of photographic reproductions. While manuscripts had always been used as evidence, in Halliwell's day, for the first time, publishers could reproduce them with photography for a larger audience. From the beginning, Victorians saw photography as an important accomplice to archival research. In 1860, Sir Henry James—photozincography's greatest advocate—opened his introduction to a report on this method by highlighting its use for reproducing *authentic* manuscripts: "The art of copying ancient manuscripts . . . by means of Photo-Zincography, is likely to prove of such great importance for the production of authentic copies of rare and valuable documents now locked up and inaccessible to the public."[173] Crucially, he emphasized photography's ability to grant more people access (albeit mediated) to archival materials. Later, in 1891, James Mew explained, "In the matter of manuscripts, the photographer will find no lack of material."[174] Shakespeare, as Alan Galey reminds us, inspired the greatest archival obsessions (next to the Bible, of course), and Shakespearean enthusiasts quickly adopted these new tools.

[172] James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps. *The Life of William Shakespeare*. London: John Russell Smith, 1848, p. x.
[173] Sir Henry James, *Photo-Zincography* (Southampton: Forbes & Bennett, 1860), p. 5.
[174] James Mew, "Photographic Archeology," *Photographic News* 34, no. 1679 (1890): 674.

By the 1850s, photography's popularity was on the rise, and by the 1860s it merged with older techniques in photolithography and photozincography. Halliwell was one of the first to use these new methods, and he made sure his readers knew it. In 1853 he began publishing his sixteen-volume set of *The Works of Shakespeare* (for which he created the Stratford scrapbooks) and advertised its technological advancements on the title page: in addition to the "historical and analytical introductions" his audience had come to expect, it showcased "portraits engraved on Steel, from Daguerreotypes of the Greatest and Most Intellectual Actors of the Age."[175] This advertisement assumed that Shakespeare would not be the only selling point of Halliwell's lavish edition: the daguerreotype's new ability to represent the bard's plays would be equally enticing to readers. At around the same time, Halliwell also issued a small pamphlet with facsimiles comparing the 1604 and 1605 editions of *Hamlet*.

While Halliwell produced small runs of prohibitively expensive volumes, many of his contemporaries distributed images more cheaply. In 1880, F. J. Furnivall (founder and director of the New Shakespeare Society) edited a series of Shakespeare's quartos, embellished with photographs prepared by William Griggs, who was "for 13 years photo-lithographer to the India Office."[176] Furnivall boasted that his facsimiles were created with this new method, and featured it on each title page. Despite the promises of these technologies, Furnivall's editions were riddled with imperfections. David McKitterick explains: "cropped titles were replaced, and in the first quarto of *Hamlet* a handful of manuscript alterations to the printed text were reproduced as if in print."[177] Such blunders remind us that Victorian facsimiles, despite promises of authenticity, were still a new form of evidence, experiencing their own adolescence. Yet Halliwell was determined to stake his reputation on his facsimiles and would retract earlier claims when he found authentic manuscripts with conflicting information (as he had with Collier's Bridgewater papers). In a slightly later publication, *New Boke about Shakespeare and Stratford-on-Avon* (1850), he

[175] William Shakespeare. *The Works of William Shakespeare,* Edited by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps. 16 vols. London: J. E. Adlard, 1853, title page.

[176] David McKitterick, *Old Books, New Technologies: The Representation, Conservation and Transformation of Books since 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 111.

[177] McKitterick, *Old Books, New Technologies*, p. 129.

writes, "nothing tends so much to settlement of literary questions, where manuscripts are concerned, as the publication of careful facsimile copies."[178] Collier's and Ireland's forgeries haunted this preface, as Halliwell explained that "facsimiles prove, or invalidate, the authenticity of the documents."[179] Unfortunately, as Schoenbaum points out, Halliwell also included "the Dulwich College papers noticing the dramatist, every one of which is a Collier forgery."[180] Facsimiles proved to be less reliable than Halliwell claimed, especially when crafted by a scholar as skilled as Collier. Whatever blunders Halliwell made, however, they were small in comparison to the bounty of authentic material he published. As he filled his works with facsimiles, he taught Victorians how to read fragmented objects as an archeologist would.

The Life of William Shakespeare, brimming with facsimiles as empirical proof, resembles Halliwell's scrapbooks. Indeed, his first biography contains seventy-six images, and begins with a facsimile of Shakespeare's signature on the title page as though the bard himself were authenticating Halliwell's work. This signature, as it appeared in Shakespeare's will, is just one of many signatures and personal marks scattered throughout the biography. Reproducing all known signatures of Shakespeare's family, Halliwell invested in what is perhaps the longest standing mode of authentication because he understood, just as early modern signatories had, that a signature consists of more than a name: it is also a promise, a performance, a mark of presence.

Halliwell repeatedly emphasizes how his reproductions approximate handling real archival objects. He introduces another exciting artifact as "the only letter addressed to Shakespeare known to exist,"[181] followed by a facsimile of it and explains, "It is a very small document, folding up in the exact size here indicated."[182] By reproducing the exact dimensions of the original manuscript, Halliwell honors the letter's physical importance. Motivated by a desire to preserve and share historical documents, he imagined his published books as proxies for the archive and taught his audience what kinds of information

[178] Halliwell, *New Boke*, pp. v–vi.
[179] Halliwell, *New Boke*, pp. v–vi.
[180] Samuel Schoenbaum. *Shakespeare's Lives*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 412–414.
[181] Halliwell, *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 179.
[182] Halliwell, *Life of Shakespeare*, p. 179.

this scrap encoded, including a location that suggested Shakespeare's possible residence.

Yet Halliwell's revelations disappointed many critics, who considered them less spectacular than expected. His title page proclaimed that the reader would find "many particulars . . . never before published,"[183] and indeed he included a bounty of new information, like his revelation that the bard's father "could not spell his name!"[184] However, as thrilling as this might have been for Halliwell, it was easy for critics to overlook. *The Athenaeum* complained that although they read his "thick octavo volume" twice, they found only three new facts. Still, they admired Halliwell's archival efforts, noting that he "collated the whole of the Stratford documents," offering materials to his readers "from whence they can reason for themselves . . . "[185] Those searching for larger revelations were disappointed, missing the archeological method's careful precision. Those attuned to the finer details in this biography—especially Halliwell's extensive footnotes—could see that it was a reckoning of past Shakespearean scholarship and a corrective to the sloppy bibliographic work done before.

The Life of William Shakespeare marked the beginning of Halliwell's quest to preserve authentic records of the bard. He would go on to publish more facsimiles from "[his] own collections, gathered together during several years."[186] In 1863 he led a successful movement to acquire sites associated with Shakespeare, such as New Place, and to secure them in a municipal trust. He also catalogued thousands of disorganized papers, from the thirteenth century on, stored and nearly forgotten in a room in Shakespeare's birthplace on Henley Street. The result of this enterprise was the 467-page tome, *A Descriptive Calendar of the Ancient Manuscripts and Records in the Possession of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon . . .* (1863). Halliwell dedicated this work to the mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon, and concluded, "All the documents are now in a state in which, with ordinary care, they can be

[183] Halliwell, *Life of Shakespeare*, title page.
[184] Halliwell provides a facsimile to show his signature, spelled "Jhon Shackspere." *Life of Shakespeare*, p.18.
[185] Review of *The Life of William Shakespeare* by J. O. Halliwell, *Athenæum* (8 January 1848): 32.
[186] Halliwell, *New Boke*, p. v.

preserved uninjured, humanly speaking, forever."[187] Halliwell left his mark on the Corporation's manuscripts by organizing them and hoped scholars might begin to study this archive now that he had made it more accessible. Later in his career, Halliwell would come to accept the limitations of Shakespearean archives, and by extension, his own evidence. He positioned his last biography, *Outlines*, within a larger cultural fascination with historicism and attempted to recover a past that eluded capture. History was itself in pieces, so Halliwell learned to accept fragmentation, which emerges as both an apology and a metaphor in his later works. Many of his publications bear more of a resemblance to lists than histories, and he regularly apologizes for offering his readers only "fragments."

This chapter marks the end of Part I, which focused on strategies for organizing ideas with the commonplace method. To this end, I have explored various modes of knowing—the Romantic imagination, scientific objectivity, and historical empiricism and I have argued that these epistemic cultures influenced commonplace-book form in nineteenth-century Britain. For example, the Coleridgean imagination led to diaristic entries, Faraday's commitment to objectivity required real-time entries, and historical empiricism necessitated material cuttings. But Romantics and Victorians also used the commonplace method to organize social groups, both real and imagined. Part II investigates how Romantics and Victorians used the commonplace method to represent people. Literary extracts worked metonymically to recall distant people just as traces of handwriting or locks of hair evoked a sense of presence. Opening the pages of a commonplace book could reveal an entire social network. John Hamilton Reynolds put it best when enumerating the wonders of his commonplace book: "I can open its leaves, and see living figures moving therein."[188]

[187] James Orchard Halliwell, *A Descriptive Calendar of the Ancient Manuscripts and Records in the Possession of the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon* (London: J. E. Adlard, 1863), p. vi.

[188] John Hamilton Reynolds, "Living Authors," *The Scots Magazine* 88 (1820): 135.

PART II

Organizing People

5

Social Commonplace Books

> You will see and acknowledge that the virtues of my commonplace book are great . . . I can open its leaves, and see living figures moving therein; turn to one part of the book and see feasting, and splendour, and merriment; turn to another and hear intelligent conversation, and see the brightest persons in the world.
>
> John Hamilton Reynolds

The previous chapters explored several modes of knowing: the Romantic imagination, scientific objectivity, and historical empiricism. I argue that these epistemic cultures influenced commonplacing's form as compilers abandoned Locke's index in favor of diaristic entries, real-time notes, and material cuttings. Chapter 5 marks the beginning of Part II, "Organizing People." Here, I focus on how socially embedded knowledge takes shape in Romantic and Victorian commonplace books. Specifically, this chapter features collaboratively produced collections, while Chapter 6 explores commonplace books compiled during times of mourning. Taken together, these final chapters argue that Romantics and Victorians leveraged the commonplace-book tradition to organize social networks and represent specific people. I begin here, with Chapter 5, and examine collaboratively produced commonplace books that reflect a socially oriented episteme. Indeed, for the past three decades, scholars of the Romantic period have consistently supported a view of literary culture as self-consciously sociable.[1] This work has expanded sites of literary production to

[1] See *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770–1840*, edited by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums.
Jillian M. Hess, Oxford University Press. © Jillian M. Hess 2022. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895318.003.0006

include the coffee-house, the tavern, and the drawing room,[2] and has done a great deal to bring women's contributions into view.[3] This chapter argues that Romantics viewed the commonplace method as a means of documenting, negotiating, and solidifying social relationships; moreover, the communal nature of many Romantic commonplace books reflects how the tradition was joining with a related form, the album. By merging these two traditions—the social and the bookish—these compilers record knowledge as a function of the group rather than the individual.[4]

Composition was (and is) rarely a solitary enterprise for Romantics (and Romanticists). Recent studies leverage commonplace books and diaries as evidence of the enormous contributions made by uncredited authors—particularly sisters and wives of more well-known writers. In this respect, Dorothy Wordsworth is prototypical: her commonplace books and diaries contain lines of verse and observations that William would later publish under his own name.[5] Despite recent work to honor Romanticism's diversity of authors and viewpoints—primarily women—the so-called "big six" (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Blake) continue to dominate Romantic studies. Wildly popular authors during the nineteenth century like Felicia Hemans and L.E.L. have only recently begun to get the scholarly attention they rightly deserve.[6] Moreover, scholars have exposed how neglecting

[2] See Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[3] There has been a welcome influx of group biographies in the Romantic period that shift our focus away from the individual. See Daisy Hay, *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron, and Other Tangled Lives* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010); Charlotte Gordon, *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft & Mary Shelley* (New York: Random House, 2016); and John Worthen, *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons & the Wordsworths in 1802* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

[4] I am influenced by feminist epistemology, especially the work of Linda Martín Alcoff, Lynn Hankinson-Nelson, and Sandra Harding.

[5] See Susan M. Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, rev. edn (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009) and Pamela Woof, *Dorothy Wordsworth: Wonders of the Everyday* (Grasmere: Wordsworth Trust, 2013).

[6] See Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Lucasta Miller, *L. E. L.: The Celebrated Lost Life and Scandalous Death of Letitia Elizabeth Landon, the Female Byron* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2019); N. Sweet and J. Melnyk, *Felicia Hemans: Reimagining Poetry in the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin: Springer, 2016).

female authors also entails neglecting feminized forms, such as album verse.[7] Similarly, scholars of the Keats–Hunt circle have helped revise a conception of Romanticism dominated by the Wordsworthian image of a solitary author "recollecting thoughts in tranquility." These scholars have shown that an ethos of communality dominated most Romantic-era literary production.[8] Manuscript evidence abounds of social writing practices, especially in collections that knit the commonplace and album traditions together. Such a collaborative ethos within the commonplace book tradition thwarts easy categorization.

Derived from the humanist *Album Amicorum*, nineteenth-century albums were blank books in which friends and family would sign their names, often along with a motto, original verse, or an illustration. According to June Schlueter, early modern albums were tools of self-fashioning; accordingly, ambitious students asked their teachers to sign:

> Typically, a contributor to an early modern *album amicorum* wrote a motto or moral, often in Latin, that served as advice to the album owner and identified the writer as one who was conversant with a classical or contemporary body of wisdom. . . . Beneath the motto, he wrote a dedication, naming the album owner and honouring him with words of respect or commendation. Usually, he placed his signature at the bottom right, and usually, though not always, he dated and signed the entry.[9]

As an early example of networking, the *album amicorum* represented an idealized version of a person's social circle, filled with famous authors and well-educated thinkers. In the sixteenth century, the theologian Philip Melanchthon praised the German *Stammbuch* because it could "remind the owners of people."[10] On the evidence of the British

[7] Katherine D. Harris, *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual, 1823–1835* (Columbus, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015) and Samantha Matthews, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture: Poetry, Manuscript, Print, 1780–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[8] For the important role of coteries in eighteenth-century literary production, see Michelle Levy, *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture* (New York: Springer, 2008).

[9] June Schlueter, *The Album Amicorum & the London of Shakespeare's Time* (London: British Library, 2011), p. 9.

[10] M. A. E. Nickson, *Early Autograph Albums in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1970), pp. 9–10.

Library's collection of early modern *album amicorum*, Schlueter explains how entries were socially valuable: "[n]ot only did the album owner receive the praise of his contributors with satisfaction; so also was he pleased to have subsequent contributors read what earlier ones had written."[11] While this particular description could equally apply to nineteenth-century albums, two significant shifts in the tradition had occurred. First, Romantics and Victorians understood albums to be feminine, and second, signatories wrote entries in the vernacular. From the early modern Latin *album amicorum* (album of friends) to the "lady's album," the tradition had shed its previous scholastic ambitions in favor of feminized domesticity. The lady's album occupied a central role in the Victorian upper- and middle-class parlor. Among all the other objects on display, Thad Logan explains that "the album was the most popular and the most sentimentally charged."[12] The tradition fits the semi-public, semi-private nature of the parlor and helped to convey the often-conflicting aims of intimacy and distance that Logan claims defined the space. Given the album's centrality, the nineteenth century produced a great deal of album verse. Indeed, as Michael C. Cohen succinctly put it, "the vast majority of poems written in the nineteenth century were never published."[13] Yet, once women embraced this genre, its prestige plummeted: albums were scorned by illustrious authors of the day such as Walter Scott who quipped about "a society for the suppression of albums."[14] William St Clair reports that "All the major poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Campbell, and others, not only copied extracts from their own famous works into such commonplace books on request, but composed occasional pieces."[15] Friends and family of no literary renown were also asked to contribute, and those who doubted their own poetic talent benefited from the album's symbiotic relationship with the literary annual tradition, where readers

[11] Schlueter, *The Album Amicorum*, p. 27.

[12] Thad Logan, *The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 124.

[13] Michael Cohen, "Album Verse and the Poetics of Scribal Circulation," in *A History of Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry*, edited by Jennifer Putzi and Alexandra Socarides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 68.

[14] Sir Walter Scott, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2010), November 20, 1825.

[15] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 225.

could find samples of the genre "Lines written in a Lady's Album" to inscribe alongside their own name.[16]

The album tradition's influence helped writers imagine commonplace books as living, social spaces—spaces in which the dead might live, and distant friends appear nearby. Such is how John Hamilton Reynolds described his collection in an essay aptly titled "Living Authors." He explains how he can find a community of people in the pages of his commonplace book. If he is feeling "Lockish," (referring to Locke's index), he might turn to the letter "B" and find "Byron, Lord" with his associated page number. Reynolds continues, "if I but say to my book, 'Call him, let me see him!' The spell on Manfred was not stronger: the spirit of Laura was not more charmed." And so, like a photograph from later in the century, Byron might appear before his friend through the alchemy of his verse: "I turn to the page, and, lo! There he is!—"In his habit as he lives!" There is his low soft voice, like a stormy wind controlled; there is the fine breadth and paleness of his forehead,—the black *intense* curls of his lordly hair,—the haught-lip,—the dark and dreaming blue light of his eye." Reynolds describes Byron's body, not his poetry—he sees his friend's hair, his eyes, not, for example, excerpts from *Manfred*. In Reynolds's own words, "It is not, What is the Book? it is, Who is the author?"[17] Reynolds was not alone in choosing to index people rather than the general topics that Locke had recommended. As the album tradition entwined with commonplacing, Romantics began to organize their collections by people, a pattern enforced by the consolidation of copyright laws around individual authors. Rather than "Politics" we might find "Pope," instead of "Baptisms," "Byron." This new system of organization turned commonplace books into representations of social networks—populated by

[16] Lindsey Eckert. "Reading Lyric's Form: The Written Hand in Albums and Literary Annuals." *ELH* 85, no. 4 (2018): 973–97. See also Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[17] Reynolds "Living Friends," p.135. He also advertises his friends, Taylor and Hessey's *The Literary Diary:* "In short, there are few of the modern writers whom I have not seen, at some time or other. And it is my constant custom . . . to write in a ruled common-place-book (of reasonable size, neatly bound, ordered after the method of the great Mr Locke, to be had of two worthy booksellers, yclept Taylor and Hessey, 93 Fleet Street, price only 12s.) my observations of the day, particularly of the literary gentlemen whom it is my good fortune to encounter,—not omitting the cut of their clothes, or the colours of their conversation."

living and dead authors, family and celebrities, that linked language and ideas to groupings of people.

Reynolds was part of a coterie surrounding Leigh Hunt at Hampstead Heath (often derided under the name "the Cockney School"). The coterie wrote verse together and for one another, which they recorded in albums and commonplace books. Hunt and Keats engaged in poetry contests and penned verse on the same topics (for example, reactions to seeing a lock of Milton's hair). For this reason, Nicholas Roe argues that Hunt's verse, in particular, presented "a humanized Romanticism in touch with people in their communities," in contrast to Wordsworth's "elemental landscapes."[18] Much evidence for this sociable Romanticism emerges in the group's commonplace books. Jeffery Cox, for example, redefines the Cockney School as collaborative and collective, using evidence from the group's shared commonplace books: the Reynolds–Hood commonplace book,[19] George Felton Mathew's sister's "The Garland: consisting of Poetical Extracts both ancient and modern,"[20] Charles Cowden Clarke's collection,[21] as well as one of Hunt's commonplace books, gifted to him by Novello.[22] Positioning poets like Hunt and Keats in relation to their communal writing practices rescues them from the Wordsworthian "solitary sublime"—which, in any case, did not really apply to Wordsworth. As Cox argues, labelling Keats and Shelley "second generation poets" makes it appear as though they only share a temporal connection, when in fact they were part of "a self-consciously defined group, an association of intellectuals that centered on Leigh Hunt and that came to be known as the cockney school."[23] Building from Roe's and Cox's work, this chapter explores how communal epistemologies, fostered by coterie writing practices, modified

[18] Nicholas Roe, *Fiery Heart: The First Life of Leigh Hunt* (New York: Random House, 2010).

[19] See Paul Kaufman, "The Reynolds–Hood Commonplace Book: A Fresh Appraisal," *Keats–Shelley Journal* 10 (Winter 1961): 43–52.

[20] See Edmund Blunden, "Keats's Friend Mathew," *English: Journal of the English Association* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1936): 46–55.

[21] John Barnard, "Charles Cowden Clarke's 'Cockney' Commonplace Book," in *Keats and History*, ed. Nicholas Roe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 65–87.

[22] Leigh Hunt's Commonplace Book. University of Iowa Library Ms/H94com.

[23] Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 4–5. See also Daisy Hay, *Young Romantics* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

commonplace-book form to incorporate elements of an adjacent notebook tradition—the album. Rather than the humanist sitting alone in his study, Hunt's circle created commonplace books that imprint the group's sociable writing practices. To make this argument, I turn to several understudied commonplace books, preserved primarily for their connection with John Keats. These include collections that belonged to Tom Keats, Richard Woodhouse, and Leigh Hunt. Taken together, these manuscripts illustrate how Keats's circle negotiated dominant tropes of album and commonplace-book culture. The chapter ends with a study of eighteen commonplace books compiled by another coterie centered around Sidmouth's Leigh family (the self-styled "Sisterhood of Slade"), along with their frequent companions John Hamilton Reynolds, Benjamin Bailey, and James Rice.

Epistemology of the Lady's Album

Scholarly interest in the materiality and poetics of sociality, particularly as they forge an alternative to capitalist modes of exchange, has generated a fascination with the album tradition. Samantha Matthews, with incisive readings of fictional representations of album culture, argues that these manuscripts "functioned as a symbolic stand-in for the feminine body."[24] The feminization of albums brought with it a general assessment of the tradition as trivial; however, this "is precisely what makes it suitable to encode unregulated and unspeakable feelings and thoughts."[25] Like Matthews, Patrizia Di Bello emphasizes the tactile quality of albums as material objects that "played an important role in the construction of the genteel identity of women and their families."[26] In other words, the so-called "Lady's Album" functioned as a way to order and represent social networks that accrued non-capitalistic value. Di Bello explains that an album "demonstrates her [the lady's] ability to socialize in a world at once fashionable and learned, using her

[24] Samantha Matthews, "Albums, Belonging, and Embodying the Feminine," in *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, edited by K. Boehm (Berlin: Springer, 2016), pp. 107–129, p. 108.
[25] Matthews, "Albums," p. 109.
[26] Patrizia Di Bello, *Women's Albums and Photography in Victorian England: Ladies, Mothers and Flirts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.

networking skills rather than her purchasing power to accumulate a small but perfectly formed collection."[27] As Matthews and Di Bello point out, the album tradition developed alongside its commercialized instantiation—literary annuals, which were anthologies of verse and light prose marketed as gifts for the Christmas season. While extremely lucrative for the celebrated authors who wrote for them (Kathryn Ledbetter reports that Walter Scott earned £500 for his contributions to just one edition[28]), they also modelled "alternative economic practices," to borrow Jill Rappoport's words. "Annuals not only shaped the way women imagined giving by modeling scenes and styles of exchange but, by cultivating a larger ethos of generosity for this publishing enterprise, also positioned readers as gift recipients, placing them under the burdens and benefits of gift exchange. As gifts, annuals created a reading community . . ."[29] With a pervasive expectation that family, friends, and acquaintances might be asked for a page of verse, literary annuals printed samples of "Lines Written in a Lady's Album" that modeled conventional decorum.

Positioned as a symbol of female sociality, the nineteenth-century album was increasingly mocked as a trivial pastime. Even Charles Lamb, who published an entire book called *Album Verses with a Few Others* in 1830, refers to them as "trifles."[30] Later, he would defend this publication: "But if to write in Albums be a sin, Lord help Wordsworth—Coleridge—Southey—Sir Walter himself—who have not been always able to resist the solicitations of the fair owners of these modern nuisances."[31] All the respected poets of the time succumbed to write album verse, Lamb reasoned, so "where was the harm" in teaching others "how they might be best, and most characteristically written?"[32] The very first poem in Lamb's collection touches on the dominant themes of album verse in the early nineteenth century: the

[27] Di Bello, *Women's Albums*, p. 50.

[28] Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 8.

[29] Jill Rappoport, *Giving Women: Alliance and Exchange in Victorian Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 20.

[30] Charles Lamb, *Album Verses: With a Few Others* (London: Edward Moxon, 1830), p. iii.

[31] Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb: Miscellaneous Prose, 1798–1834* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), p. 340.

[32] Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, p. 341.

album's materiality, reflections on the tradition, the scribe's humility, praise for the album's owner, and hints at a future when the writer would be gone but his or her verse would remain.

> An Album is a Garden, not for show
> Planted, but use; where wholesome herbs should grow.
> A Cabinet of curious porcelain, where
> No fancy enters, but what's rich or rare.
> A Chapel, where mere ornamental things
> Are pure as crowns of saints, or angels' wings.
> A List of living friends; a holier Room
> For names of some since mouldering in the tomb,
> Whose blooming memories life's cold laws survive;
> And, dead elsewhere, they here yet speak, and live.
> Such, and so tender, should an Album be;
> And, Lady, such I wish this book to thee.[33]

The album, Lamb explains, collects people just as a bouquet gathers flowers. He captures the tradition's unique tenor in the Romantic period: saccharine goodness cut by death's macabre shadow and, ultimately, transcendence through the vehicle of album verse. Though a friend's body might be "mouldering in the tomb,"[34] album verse was commonly viewed as a tool that allowed her to once again "speak . . . and live."[35]

Following albums, commonplacing culture began to view verse as representations of the body. In particular, two bodily traces—handwriting and locks of hair—accrued symbolic value. Handwriting represented a present absence—a kind of ellipses that held the intimate imprint of a bodily encounter. Like handwriting, hair never decays; unlike handwriting, hair is not an imprint, but the thing itself. Hunt suggests creating a bookmark from a braid of hair, claiming that it was "the most precious of all keepsakes."[36] As tropes that appear throughout album and commonplace culture, hands and hair resurface as meditations on embodiment and absence. With their insistence on bodily traces, Romantic albums took on a gothic modality: writers

[33] Lamb, "An Album is a Garden," *Album Verses, with a Few Others*, pp. 1–2.
[34] Lamb, "An Album is a Garden," *Album Verses, with a Few Others*, line 8.
[35] Lamb, "An Album is a Garden," *Album Verses, with a Few Others*, line 10.
[36] Leigh Hunt, "Pocket-Books and Keepsakes," in *The Keepsake* (London: Thomas Davison, Whitefriars, 1828), p. 18.

equated signing their names with inscribing their body. It was not uncommon for friends to add a clipping of hair along with verse that describes it as a metaphor for friendship. Consider Eliza Crooke's clipped braid in Anne Wagner's album.[37] Writing in 1795, Crooke's verse positions this bodily extract and its accompanying ribbon as a metaphor for friendship: "Close as this lock of Hair the ribband binds | May friendship's sacred bonds unite our minds."[38] Crooke's writing transforms the lock of hair as a representation of her bodily presence and the ribbon tied around it, the bonds of friendship. Even if other signatories did not enclose an actual part of their body, they hoped their handwriting would do similar work. Another friend, who goes by the name Ms Casson, hoped her entry would remind Wagner of her: "When on this page fair maid your eyes are bent, | Think on one who much your worth admires . . ."[39] With this verse, Casson projects a time in the future when she might not be sitting beside Wagner and asks her friend to read this verse as a proxy for her body.

Autographs

Writing around an insect "accidentally crushed" and preserved on an empty page of a Lady's Album, James Montgomery reflects on life, death, and the traces that remain.

> Lie there, embalm'd from age to age!—
> This is the Album's noblest page,
> Though every glowing leaf be fraught
> With painting, poets, and thought;
> Where tracks of mortal hands are seen,
> A hand invisible has been,
> And left this autograph behind,
> This image from th' eternal mind;
> A work of skill surpassing sense,
> A labor of Omnipotence!

[37] Wagner's album is available to view online: "Anne Wagner Album," NYPL Digital Collections, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-b630-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

[38] "Anne Wagner Album." [39] "Anne Wagner Album."

Though frail as dust it meet thine eye,
He form'd this gnat who built the sky.
Stop—lest it vanish at thy breath,
This speck had life, and suffer'd death.[40]

The crushed flea, in Montgomery's interpretation, is an imprint left behind by "a hand invisible." Distinguished from the "tracks of mortal hands," such as his own entry, Montgomery reads the crushed fly as divine autograph. With his final lines, Montgomery reminds his readers of their own living bodies, filled with breath that might disturb the gnat. As further protection, Montgomery wrote his poem around the gnat, as though protecting it from the careless breath of future readers who might not have realized that they gazed upon holy signatures in a seraphic book. In another poem written in a lady's album, Montgomery ends with the hope that all the collected signatures will be transposed into "His Book of Life"—as though writing one's name into an album was an act of alchemical significance. Like the gnat, preserved beyond its death, each mark, "embalm'd from age to age," would outlast its signatory.[41]

While Montgomery struck a decidedly religious tone in his album verse, others worried over what their handwriting might reveal. Some speculated on the new physiognomic research coming from the continent that suggested a person's handwriting contained clues to his or her mind. Johann Kasper Lavater briefly mentions handwriting in his *Essays on Physiognomy*, where he suggests that it was "highly probable that each of us has his own hand-writing, individual and inimitable."[42] Furthermore, he expounded on script's diversity, exclaiming that "the least word communicated to paper, how many points, how many curves does it not contain!" Lavater's work was followed in earnest by Èdouard Auguste Patrice Hocquart, who, in 1812, published an entire book devoted to the connection between script and a person's internal world, *The Art of Judging the Character of Individuals from their*

[40] Montgomery, James. "Epitaph on a Gnat found Crushed on the Leaf of a Lady's Album." In *Forget Me Not*, 67. London: R. Ackermann, 1829.
[41] Montgomery, "Epitaph," p. 67.
[42] Johann Kaspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, trans. C. Moore, vol. 4 (London: W. Wilson, 1797), p. 200.

Handwriting and Style.[43] Offering samples from the pens of famous figures, Hocquart attempted to extrapolate personality traits from the curvature of script. He reads "the most palpable frivolity" in "ridiculous flourishes,"[44] or a "lady distinguished by a cultivated mind" because her writing exhibits "exactness without minuteness."[45] Having seen Hocquart's book in France, Isaac Disraeli published a reflection on the changing nature of handwriting. Like a person's voice or face, Disraeli exclaims: "Assuredly Nature would prompt every individual to have a distinct sort of writing." However, he cautions, a newly "regulated" style transformed writing into a "mechanical process."[46] All students learn a similar hand and are "forced in their automatic motions, as if acted on by the pressure of a steam-engine."[47] Here Disraeli registers a fear of mechanization, which, extended to the hand, would diminish the value of an autograph by making it less variable and, therefore, less personalized.

Because of the perceived connection between mind and hand, a person's writing seemed to lay bare their interiority. Thus, an album's value depended upon the signatures it contained — with each signature valued, at least in part, for its physical connection to the signatory. As a result, writers often paused to consider theories of handwriting. Charles Lamb references this new science of physiognomy in verse written for the album of his adopted daughter, Emma Isola. Under the title "What is an Album?" Lamb describes the new importance of autographs:

> And since some Lavaters, with head-pieces comical,
> Have pronounce'd people's hands to be physiognomical,
> Be sure that you stuff it with autographs plenty
> All penn'd in a fashion so stiff and so dainty,
> They no more resemble folk's ordinary writing
> Than lines penn'd with pains to extempore writing . . .[48]

[43] Èdouard Auguste Patrice Hocquart, *The Art of Judging the Character of Individuals from their Handwriting and Style*, ed. Edward Lumley (London: John Russell Smith, 1875). Originally published in French as *Le Secrétaire de tout le monde, ou, la Correspondance usuelle.*

[44] Hocquart, *The Art of Judging*, p. 37. [45] Hocquart, *The Art of Judging*, p. 40.

[46] Isaac Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature: Consisting of Anecdotes, Characters, Sketches, and Observations, Literary, Critical, and Historical* (London: J. Murray, 1791), p. 164.

[47] Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, p. 164.

[48] Charles Lamb, "What Is an Album?," in *The Life, Letters, and Writings of Charles Lamb* (London: W. W. Gibbings, 1892), pp. 324–325.

Lamb questions Lavater's logic because, he explains, albums collect samples of a person's best handwriting—"so stiff and so dainty." Lavater himself anticipated this objection and reasons that the fact that writers' handwriting varies based on mood and situation only strengthens his theory because it demonstrates how interior conditions such as anxiety or calmness reveal themselves in script. The pressure of writing in an album, given its ties to self-representation, would suggest that contributors put their finest selves forward; thus, Lavater reasoned, their signatures captured their best attempt to represent themselves.

The history of handwriting up to the nineteenth century is one of "simplification and standardization," as Aileen Douglas teaches us.[49] By the seventeenth century, Jonathan Goldberg explains, the earlier secretary hand was replaced by italic hand, which led to round hand from which "our modern hand descends."[50] Eighteenth-century writing manuals such as George Bickham's authoritative *The Universal Penman* taught round form. Bickham's title suggests that handwriting was becoming increasingly regulated. In place of the many hands that identified writers in the early modern period, round hand became the norm. The self-proclaimed writing master, Charles Snell, went so far as to demonstrate *mathematically* "how better alphabets . . . may be performed than has ever yet been published in Great Britain."[51] His instructions reference geometry—perpendicular lines, arches, circles—and he offers diagrams for each letter. Standardized handwriting, which Snell and Bickham inherited from the seventeenth century, produced "the individual with one hand or one spelling of the name."[52] Paradoxically, with the consolidation of the signature as an italic form, autographs became the mark of an individual; the standardized form made individual differences all the more visible. Regulating handwriting was, in a sense, also regulating the body. For example, Joseph Champion, who published

[49] Aileen Douglas, *Work in Hand: Script, Print, and Writing, 1690–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 8.

[50] Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 53.

[51] Charles Snell, *The Standard Rules of the Round and Round-Text-Hands: Mathematically Demonstrating How Better Alphabets of Those Hands May Be Performed than Have Ever yet Been Publish'd in Great-Britain* . . . (London: Printed for and sold by Henry Overton and John Hoole, 1728), title page.

[52] Goldberg, *Writing Matter*, p. 244.

Penmanship or the Art of Fair Writing in 1770, offers "directions for Holding the Pen; extending the Arm; and position of the Body."[53] Choreographed writing such as this further enforced a connection between handwriting and the body that produced it.

With its prismatic ability to represent the writer's personhood, handwriting was among the best representations of a person before photography became widely accessible. In this view, albums were proto-photographic in their desire to capture physical presence in such a way that it would outlast the living body. By the early nineteenth century, as Douglas notes, handwriting seemed to offer an unadulterated glimpse into a writer's "interior space of thoughts."[54] Album culture absorbed the enormous value placed on handwriting at the turn of the nineteenth century. Hegel, for example, meditated on the hand as "an instrument of will." [55] Therefore, collecting autographs was a practice predicated on the idea that albums were collecting not only handwriting, but also a privileged view into an interior, authentic self. Handwriting manuals along with album culture primed Romantics to invest self-formation in handwriting. Indeed, as an extension of the anatomical, grasping hand, handwriting could represent the entire body. Hence, writing in another person's commonplace book or album signaled an embodied intimacy—one which thrilled John Keats's friends and family.

Keats's Hand

The Fault is in the quill.
John Keats, writing to Fanny Brawne[56]

Writing to his friend Dilke in 1820, Keats alludes to Lavater's physiognomy, saying "that the Character of a Man may be known by his

[53] Joseph Champion, *Penmanship: Or, the Art of Fair Writing. A New Essay, Etc.* (London: Printed by the author, 1770), p. 7.

[54] Douglas, *Work in Hand*, p. 42.

[55] Hegel, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Revised ed. edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 178–179. See also Pamela Gilbert's fascinating discussion of legality and handwriting in *Victorian Skin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), especially ch. 8, "Tattoo."

[56] John Keats, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 262.

handwriting."[57] Like his contemporaries, Keats worried over the degradation of script in the early nineteenth century. This anxiety is especially pronounced in a letter to Fanny Brawne, written that same year: "I have been writing with a vile old pen the whole week, which is excessively ungallant. The fault is in the Quill . . . However, these last lines are in a much better style of penmanship [though] a little disfigured by the smear of black currant jelly."[58] Here, Keats highlights the technologies of letter writing: the "vile old pen" makes for a less elegant "hand." In other words, Keats's writing in this instance should not be taken as a reflection of his character, but of a faulty tool. Similarly, the "smear of black currant jelly" draws attention to letter writing's other essential technology, paper. Both the faulty pen and jelly mar the letter, but in their imperfection, they also make the underlying technologies visible. With its stain, the jelly highlights the paper's physicality, its very presence as it lay on Keats's writing desk. By drawing attention to his pen and paper's defects, Keats also emphasizes how technologies of writing necessarily mediate his body. In the same letter, he suggests that he views Brawne's letters as proxies for her body, when he admits to taking them to bed. "I read your letter in bed last night, and that might be the reason for my sleeping so much better."[59] While this letter's underlying eroticism might be debatable, Keats clearly notes a relationship between reading a lover's letter and bodily needs, such as sleeping. Along similar lines, Keats's friends placed a high value on the ingenue's handwriting, especially as it appeared in their own personal commonplace books.

In fact, Keats's first poems circulated, not in print, but in manuscript commonplace books kept by friends and family. His brother Tom, who would die from tuberculosis, that "family disease," kept one such collection. The poet's publisher, Richard Woodhouse, kept another. Across the Atlantic, Keats's brother and sister-in-law, George and Georgiana, transcribed his poetry as they received autograph versions by mail. Though Keats rarely wrote in these manuscripts, wherever the poet's hand appeared, the owner would inscribe a note, lest anyone overlook that this was, in fact, John Keats's hand. One such friend, Richard Woodhouse kept a collection of verse authored by his friends,

[57] Keats, *The Letters*, p. 272.
[58] Keats, *The Letters*, p. 272.
[59] Keats, *The Letters*, p. 262.

especially Keats and John Hamilton Reynolds.[60] On one page, Keats's "living hand" makes a brief appearance to correct a single word in Woodhouse's transcription of "To Sleep." Woodhouse documents his friend's presence when, on the verso, he explains, "This word 'lulling' is in K's handwriting. The correction was made when he borrowed this book to select a small poem to write in an album, intended to consist of original poetry for a lady."[61] Likewise, the poet's sister-in-law, Georgiana, kept a scrapbook filled almost entirely with newspaper articles. She reserves a single page to commemorate John Keats's death. Here she pastes obituaries above a fair copy of the poem he had written for her, "Nymph of the Downward Smile and Sidelong Glance." Like Woodhouse, Georgiana highlights how this page contains the poet's hand: "The following M.S. with signature is by Mr. J Keats, poet whose death is mentioned beneath from the Literary chronicle March 31st 1821."[62] Georgiana created a cenotaphic memorial for her brother-in-law, an impulse that we will explore further in Chapter 6. (See Figure 5.1.)

Like Woodhouse and Georgiana Keats, the poet's ill-fated brother Tom kept a notebook filled almost entirely with John's poetry. Tom transcribed "Calidore," a poem in which the eponymous character is "burning to hear of Knightly deeds."[63] In Keats criticism, this poem is understood as an early representation of Leigh Hunt's influence on the budding poet because it includes Hunt's favorite stylistic elements: Spenserian echoes (the name Calidore comes from the *Faerie Queene*), chivalric themes, and open couplets. And indeed, Tom's commonplace book reveals that Hunt approved of the poem. This copy reveals Hunt's markings—marginal lines and boxes around words—which signal his appreciation and congregate around references to chivalry, rich descriptions of landscapes, and open couplets. These lines, though they don't change the content of the page, shift the reader's focus and

[60] Incidentally, Woodhouse served as legal counsel to the publishers Taylor and Hessey and kept his collection in a dummy copy of their *Literary Diary or An Improved Commonplace Book* (discussed in Chapter 1).

[61] Richard Woodhouse, "Commonplace Book of Poems Mainly by John Keats" (1819), MS Keats 3.3.1, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[62] Georgiana Keats, "Scrapbook and Commonplace Book Entries Written in Several Hands…" MS Keats 3.3.4, Houghton Library, Harvard University. For more on these memorial practices see Jillian M. Hess, "This Living Hand: Commonplacing Keats," *Keats–Shelley Review* 24 (2010): 15–21.

[63] Tom Keats, "Commonplace Book Compiled by Tom Keats," 1814. MS Keats 3.3.5.

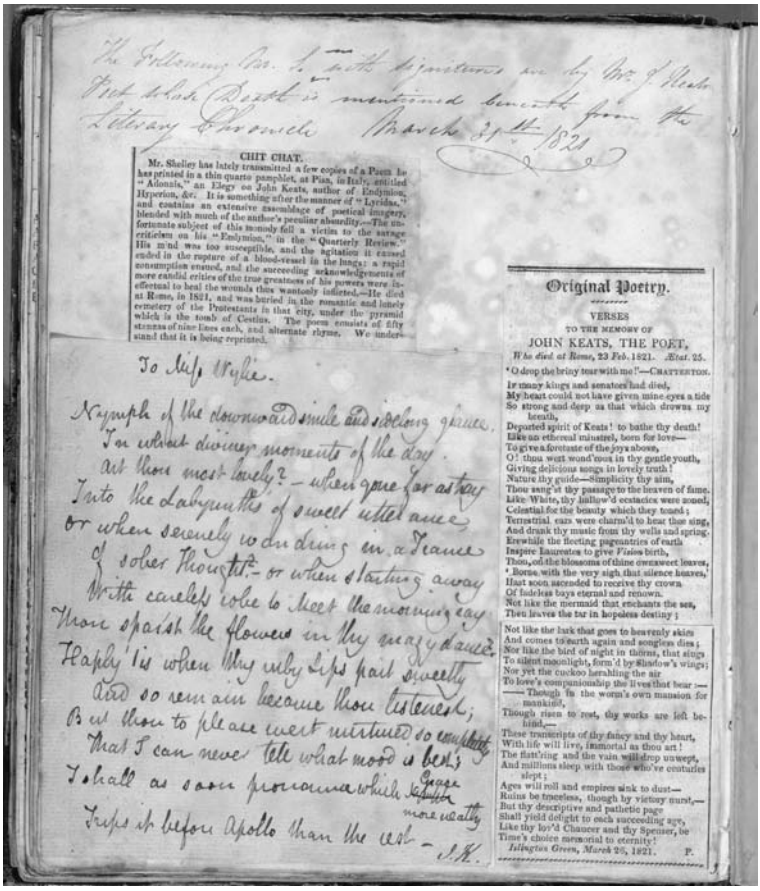


FIGURE 5.1 Georgiana Keats's Memorial Page for John Keats. John Keats Collection (MS Keats 3.3.4), Houghton Library, Harvard University.

become entangled with the poem itself. Hunt used Tom Keats's commonplace book as a kind of pedagogical tool—a space to instruct his friend on effective elements of versification. Equally important is the fact that Tom Keats cared enough about Leigh Hunt's markings to record what would otherwise have been anonymous. Tom Keats

writes: "marked by Leigh Hunt—1816."[64] This note implies that he expected future readers to flip through the pages of his collection. Certainly, he didn't need to remind himself that the markings belonged to Hunt. In May of the same year, Hunt would be the first to publish a poem by John Keats ("On Solitude") in his liberal weekly, *The Examiner*. And, that October, he formally introduced Keats (along with John Hamilton Reynolds) in an essay titled "Young Poets." Here Hunt publishes another poem that Tom Keats had transcribed, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." By way of introducing the poem, Hunt draws his readers' attention to particularly beautiful lines or words: "we do not hesitate to pronounce excellent, especially the last six lines. The word swims is complete; and the whole conclusion is equally powerful."[65] With his comments, it is as though Hunt has taken a pen to Keats's verse yet again, marking off the sonnet's concluding sestet and directing readers' attention to the word "swims." Hunt teaches his readers to think in terms of extractions, to focus on sections of a text worthy of remembrance.

The fragment, Romanticism's most recognizable form, primed readers to approach incomplete texts as indeterminate.[66] Marjorie Levinson has argued that the fragment was a "peculiarly Romantic form," and that as it spread throughout the early nineteenth century, it took a variety of configurations because it was "an ideological as well as formal issue."[67] The fragment, then, serves to forestall an ending—leaving verse incomplete opens an infinite space for revision, or so Romantics thought. And because the fragment seemed almost polygenic, with its ability to grow new life from its original form, it transcends the author's life, with its completion eternally imminent. The incomplete nature of Romantic poetry emerged from what Schlegel understood to be its inherent desire to combine and "fuse" different genres and material:

[64] Tom Keats, "Commonplace Book."

[65] Leigh Hunt, "Young Poets," *The Examiner* (The British Library, December 1, 1816), <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/young-poets>.

[66] In fragment 116 of the *Athenaeum Fragments*, Schlegel characterizes Romantic poetry as process rather than product; it is, he argues, "still in the process of becoming; indeed, that is its true essence, that it can only eternally become and never be perfected." See Friedrich von Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 175.

[67] Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form*, new edn (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 5.

"poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and that of nature."[68] Moreover, he imagined poetry as a function of life, and life a function of poetry: "to make poetry lively and social and to make life and society poetic."[69] This is precisely the philosophical crux of the Keats-circle commonplace books, which brought poetry into life and life into poetry. Just as handwriting seemed to capture a person's vitality, samples of hair were, to Hunt's mind, "the most precious of all keepsakes."

Milton's Hair

> . . . It is easy to combine with a literary keepsake the most precious of all the keepsakes—hair. A braid of it may be used instead of ribbon to mark the page with, and attached to the book in the usual way of a register.
>
> Leigh Hunt, writing for *The Keepsake*, 1828

Many albums and scrapbooks radiate from a central desire to represent people, especially those who remained inaccessible—often through death or celebrity. Leigh Hunt was, himself, a collector of hair. He kept a scrapbook that he filled with locks of hair cut from the heads of famous people. Hunt organizes his collection with an index of people whose hair graces the pages of his book—including George Washington, Napoleon, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats. Hunt often proves the authenticity of these cuttings with descriptions of how certain locks of hair came into his possession. The carefully noted provenance of these objects recalls Romantic-era collections of ballads discussed in the previous chapter; however, unlike ballads, hair is a physical object with a precise origin. Of all the hair in his scrapbook, Hunt was particularly enamored with a small strand of John Milton's hair. He notes the chain of ownership that brought the poet's hair into his possession: "Milton—given by Dr. Johnson to Hooke, and by Hooke

[68] Friedrich von Schlegel. *Philosophical Fragments*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p.31.

[69] von Schlegel. *Philosophical Fragments* , p. 31.

to Dr. Batty, who gave it to me. L.H."[70] This level of historical empiricism registers a similar concern for authenticity that increases in relation to historical distance. The sample of hair from Keats, for example, required no such authentication. Rather than a chain of oral transmission ("from the mouth of a milkmaid," for example) Hunt narrates a chain of ownership. (See Figure 5.2.)

Poetry had a social function for Hunt's circle, as demonstrated by their occasional verse and literary contests. Yet, this community extended beyond the living and tools like this scrapbook of hair allowed Hunt to converse with his favorite authors. For example, he imagines Milton's hair as a conduit for intimate conversation.[71] This particular sample of hair inspired occasional poetry written by Hunt and Keats to commemorate "the poet of *Paradise Lost*." These poems capture different reactions to the same organic matter, and each is a study of each poet's relationship to their own embodiment. While Hunt responds with "the pleasure of tender human contact," Keats shuns his own body as he attempts "a grandeur appropriate to the poet of *Paradise Lost*." Hunt's easy engagement with Milton's hair licenses him to include his own verse alongside the lock. His poem begins by putting his own body in relation to Milton's hair, "It lies before me there." Hunt's verse focuses on the immediacy of the cutting, and the power of his own breath to animate it:

> It lies before me there, and my own breath
> Stirs its thin outer threads, as though beside
> The living head I stood in honored pride,
> Talking of lovely things that conquer death.
> Perhaps he pressed it once, or underneath
> Ran his fine fingers, when he leant, blank-eyed,
> And saw, in fancy, Adam and his bride
> With their rich locks, or his own Delphic wreath.
> There seems a love in hair, though it be dead.

[70] Leigh Hunt, "Collection of Hair" (*c.*1820–*c.*1860), Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin, <https://hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15878coll14/id/186/rec/3>.

[71] For an analysis of poetry about hair as ekphrasis see Leila Walker. "Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Ekphrasis of Hair." *European Romantic Review* 24, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 231–50.

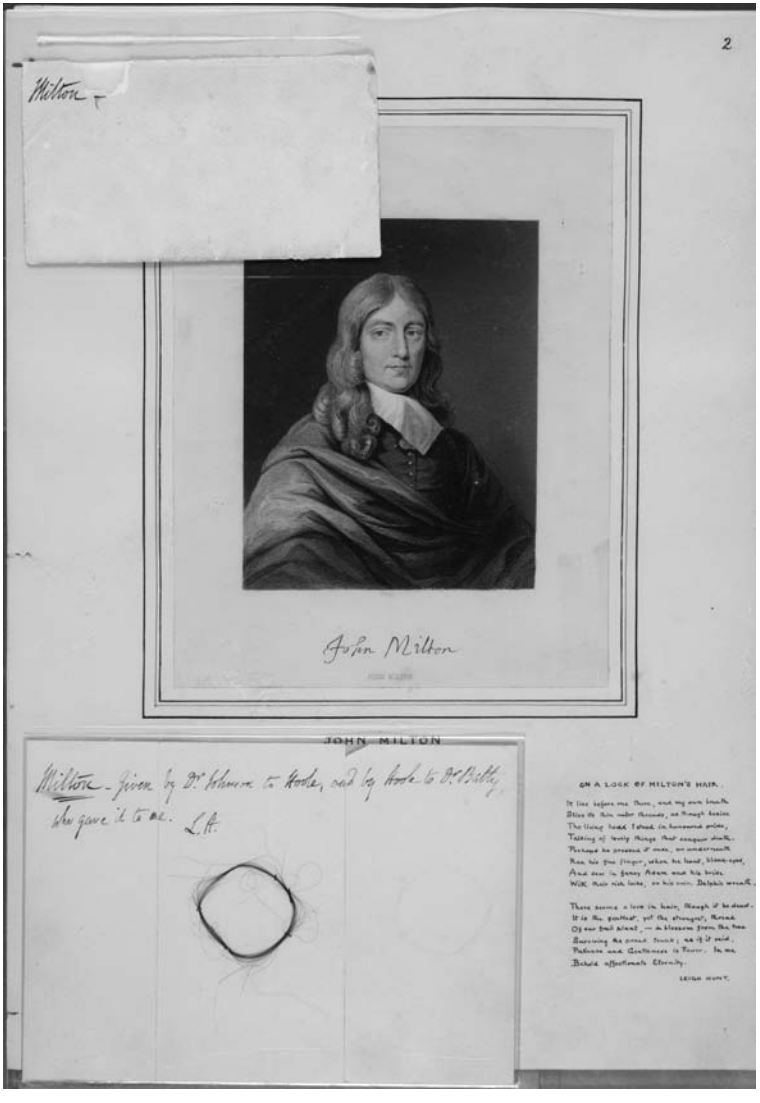

2
Milton -
John Milton
JOHN MILTON
Milton - given by Dr Johnson to Hoole, and by Hoole to Dr Bailey,
she gave it to me. L.H.
ON A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR.

FIGURE 5.2 Leigh Hunt's Scrapbook of Hair, Milton's Page, STARK 6693 STK, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas.

Hunt finds infinite conversation in this strand of hair. While marveling at his power to move Milton's hair with his own breath, Hunt positions himself as a physical interlocutor with Milton. For Hunt, Milton's hair is a medium through which the great poet might still maintain a bodily presence, albeit a fractured one. Indeed, his description seems to anticipate the seemingly magical talent of telegraphy, which used wires to connect distances. That hair does not decay marks it as a uniquely stable part of human anatomy. In Hunt's words, "It is the gentlest, yet the strongest thread." And as though it were a talisman, Hunt feels an almost bodily connection to Milton. His breath moves the poet's hair, the very hair that Milton himself (Hunt imagines) ran his fingers through while penning his description of Adam and Eve's "rich locks." Hunt braids his own living breath with Milton's hair and that of characters in *Paradise Lost*. It is only with the sonnet's volta that Hunt acknowledges Milton's death.

That threads of hair could serve as communication channels, traversing not only distance but also time, appears as the central conceit of both Leigh Hunt's poem on Milton's hair and John Keats's verse on the same subject. The primary difference is that Keats imagines a disembodied communication; he ignores his own body until the final stanza, which describes his flushed forehead. Keats reads Milton's lock of hair as a powerful symbol—"the simplest vassal of thy Power,"[72]—rather than as a tool to converse with the poet. Significantly, because Keats does not register Milton's embodiment, he writes a more abstract poem than Hunt. Rather than conjuring an image of Milton writing *Paradise Lost*, Keats refers to the author with abstractions: "spirit," "beauty," and "melody." In this sense, Milton's hair enables what Yohei Igarashi describes as Keats's "fantasy of rapid communication at a distance, offset by the heightened sense of the difficulties of mutual understanding."[73] Though Keats addresses the great poet, this is a conversation that takes place across the ether. Keats was fascinated with seeing his own mortality mirrored in relics of the past (the Elgin Marbles or a Grecian Urn). Looking upon Milton's hair, one wonders if

[72] John Keats, "On Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair," in *The Complete Poetical Works of John Keats* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934), line 35.

[73] Yohei Igarashi. *The Connected Condition: Romanticism and the Dream of Communication*. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 143.

Keats anticipated that a cutting of his own hair would reside in the same book only a few short years later. The verse offers hints to this effect with its notice of maddening "glimpses at futurity":[74] when Keats suggests a bodily effect on his own forehead, it is also a patch of skin close to his own hair. And yet, even such a diminutive representation—Milton's "bright hair"—forcefully exerts the poet's brilliance for Keats, as well as his former physicality, suddenly and startlingly. The immortality of Milton's words seems to meet the mortality of the man's body in this lock of hair: a Miltonic extract that was not a quotation.

If hair is a kind of communication network—as Hunt's and Keats's verses suggest—what kind of information does it convey? And how are we to "read" a lock of hair? The budding communication network of telegraphy accepted a notion of communication distributed in code through a series of taps that could then be translated into words.[75] Something similar happens here in the ways that Hunt and Keats envision Milton's hair as a conduit, an opportunity for what would otherwise be an entirely impossible interaction. Milton's hair can be understood as a technology insofar as it enables a relationship that transcends time and space as it is simultaneously embodied and disembodied. By placing Milton's lock of hair within his scrapbook, Hunt places it into a network for many more "threads," each of which is only a fragment, a "cutting," and a partial representation. This is precisely why Hunt's collection of hair maintains such power: it carries with it all the force of the fragment, Romanticism's favored lyric form. Like the Romantic fragment, Milton's hair is open to interpretation—it is always in a process of reaching back in time, continually open to new narratives.

Milton's lock of hair resembles a textual quotation: extracted from a larger entity, they both gesture back to their origin while also explicitly marking a separation. Susan Stewart notes the "ambivalent" status of quotation, which "appears as a severed head, a voice whose authority is grounded in itself, and therein lies its power and its limit."[76] The

[74] Keats, "On Seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair," line 31.

[75] Standage tells us that Victorians referred to telegraphs as the "highway of thought." See Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's On-Line Pioneers* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), p. xviii.

[76] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 19.

meaning of hair transforms in the album, becoming symbolic rather than functional. The hair no longer covers Milton's head, but, rather, evokes the head it once lay upon. Unlike a printed quotation, however, Milton's hair is no longer reproducible. In its singularity, it attests to an authenticity that remains debatable. Like so much of the fraudulent empiricism discussed in the previous chapter, considerable doubt remains over the true origin of this particular lock of hair. As Hunt's friends died, his collection grew with samples of hair taken from William Hazlitt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Godwin Shelley, and, of course, John Keats. These extracts taken from his friends combine to form a ghostly representation of his former "round table."

Leigh Hunt as a poet and essayist wrote with an air of familiarity and conviviality. For example, the periodical he formed with Hazlitt, *The Round-Table*, was meant to mimic the cheerful conversations that occurred at his own dining table. And once many of his friends had died, Hunt continued to include them as quotations in his work. In his *Autobiography*, he quotes epigraphs from a friend, Egerton Webbe, to "give my jaded spirits lift."[77] Yet, Hunt pauses to reflect that while he sits beside the fire, laughing over Webbe's jokes, the same friend can no longer visit for tea. As he reflects, "All these lovers of books have themselves become books!"[78] For Hunt, books were not inanimate objects, but company. In his ode to bibliophilia, "My Books," he describes his library as though he were sitting in the middle of a crowded room: "I looked sideways at my *Spencer*, my *Theocritus*, and my *Arabian Nights*; then above them at my Italian poets; then behind me *Dryden* and *Pope*, my romances, and my *Boccaccio*; then on my left side at my *Chaucer*, who lay on a writing desk…"[79] Hunt uses the relative pronoun "who," as though his Chaucer were an actual person. All of this makes it quite understandable that Charles Lamb might kiss a folio of Chapman's *Homer*. Once Hunt's friends died, he transferred his affection for them to their writing—a distinctly Romantic logic that conforms to the larger *topos* of inscribing one's self within a person's album, as we will see in the next section.

[77] Leigh Hunt, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt* (London: Smith, Elder, 1850), p. 430.
[78] Leigh Hunt, "My Books," in *Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, ed. Robert Morrison, 6 vols, vol. 3 (Brookfield, VT: Pickering & Chatto, 2002), p. 36.
[79] Leigh Hunt, "My Books," p. 24.

The Sisterhood of Slade

Keats's hand and Milton's hair fit into the larger Romantic *topos* of social memory located in metonymic representations of the body. Album culture, with its economy of the gift and embodied poetics, exemplifies how social circles established and organized relationships. Here I focus on the "Sisterhood of Slade," which included the three Leigh sisters—Thomazine,[80] Sarah, and Mary—along with their cousin, Maria Pearse Leigh. The women lived in the coastal town of Sidmouth in Slade House, which, according to an 1816 description, was "[p]laced at the head of a most beautiful and richly wooded vale, commands a delightful view of the sea: it was built by the late William Leigh, Esq. and is now the residence of his widow and family."[81] From 1814 to 1817, Benjamin Bailey, James Rice, and, later, John Hamilton Reynolds befriended (and flirted with) Thomazine, Sarah, Mary, and Maria. Thomazine records meeting James Rice on June 26, 1814 while taking tea. On the following day, Rice would introduce the sisters to Benjamin Bailey. Thus, the original circle of six was set. They celebrated their friendship by planting six sweetbriars in Slade Valley's garden. After reading and copying Wordsworth's "Poems on the Naming of Places"[82] into their commonplace books, they "made a walking tour of the coast, naming six rocks of the Dunscombe Cliffs for each of the group and adding a seventh 'Union Rock' to symbolize their closeness."[83] The group located their friendship in the cliff's dramatic landscape as well as the pages of their notebooks, now gathered in the Keats House's "Leigh Brown-Lockyer Collection." While not necessarily unique in

[80] Thomazine's name appears with various spellings throughout the Keats House collection. When members of the coterie spell her name "Thomazin" or "Tamsine," they are referring to the same person. In these pages, I refer to Thomazine by her official name. The Unitarian Historical Society records the birth of her daughter, named "Thomazine": "She was born at Sidmouth on June 4 1822, the daughter of *Thomazine* Pearse and Captain *John Carslake*, R.N., . . . *Thomazine* Carslake *married* Samuel Woolcott Browne of Bridgwater in 1850 . . . . The couple lived in Bridgwater, where their daughters Annie *Leigh* and *Thomazine* Mary were born, before moving to Clifton."

[81] *The Beauties of Sidmouth Displayed* (Printed for John Wallis, 1816), p. 61.

[82] See Worthen, *The Gang*, p. 11 for the social environment in which Wordsworth composed this poem.

[83] Leonidas M. Jones, *The Life of John Hamilton Reynolds* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, 1984), p. 59.

content, these seventeen manuscripts are unique in having remained together. They were donated to the Keats House Museum by Thomazine Leigh Carslake's grandchildren, Annie Leigh Browne[84] and her sister Mary, who later became Lady Lockyer.

The friendship plays out through hundreds of entries in the sisters' commonplace books. Though John Hamilton Reynolds would not meet the sisters for another year, Bailey and Rice transcribed their friend's verse into the Leigh commonplace books. In October of 1815, Rice spoke of Reynolds in a letter to "My dear little Tamsine [*sic*]—Friend by Choice & Sister by adoption." Rice describes his friendship with John Hamilton Reynolds, who "our delightful & dear Sisterhood of Slade"[85] had not yet met, though Bailey had transcribed Reynolds's verse in the sisters' commonplace books. In this sense, Reynolds was part of the coterie before he had met the sisters. Indeed, he had helped Bailey and Rice pen a poem for Sarah's birthday in November of 1815. As Bailey describes it: "Reynolds late in the Evening regretted that we had not sooner thought of writing a Poem on the occasion in *triplets*. Each person writing a line . . . I therefore immediately produced the paper, and wrote the first line . . ."[86] Borrowed from *Macbeth*, Bailey titles the verse "Thrice to Thine" and begins with ocean waves, the landscape of their friendship.

1
Sarah! The wave that dances on the sea
Whose face reflects each summer beam like thee
Hast all thy gladness, all thy melody.

2
Oh Thou! Adopted sister—chosen friend
Awhile our hearts thy softer spirit lend—
And with our thoughts thy happy mildness blend.

[84] Annie Leigh Brown, an educator and suffragette, established a trade union for women and founded a college hall for London University's female students.

[85] Clayton E. Hudnall, "John Hamilton Reynolds, James Rice, and Benjamin Bailey in the Leigh Browne-Lockyer Collection," *Keats–Shelley Journal* 19 (1970): p. 32. Though written in 1970, Hudnall provides the fullest account of the Leigh Browne-Lockyer Collection of commonplace books. See also Andrew Motion. *Keats: a Biography*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 185–187.

[86] John Hamilton Reynolds, *The Letters of John Hamilton Reynolds*, ed. Leonidas M. Jones (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), Bailey to Sarah Leigh, November 24, 1815.

3
Fair as the star that haunts the western sky,
Gazing the silent moon that looks from high
Before whose lovely light the dark clouds fly;—

4
Fresh as the flowers that fringe thy leafy shore
Listening in gladness to the wild wave's roar
Ere vestal Evening's Emerald hues are o'er:—[87]

The poem continues for three more stanzas, after which, the authors sign their names. As Bailey would explain in his letter, part of the fun was in trying to "puzzle" the person writing next. The three friends worked together to write verse typical of the lady's album tradition—simple, rhymed triplets that catalogue the recipient's virtues. The verse is also clearly situated in Sidmouth—with the waves' "roar" and "the flowers that fringe thy leafy shore." Even as the friends wrote this verse in London, it honors the geographic specificity of their friendship. The waves crash on the shore of Sidmouth's beach, sourced from the English Channel. The language recalls other samples of occasional verse the friends wrote into the Leigh commonplace books. In volume three of Thomazine's collection, for example, Bailey describes the "ocean's waves . . . as they 'curled their heads.'"[88] The quotation marks suggest that Bailey collaged a bit of their conversation into his verse. On the recto, Bailey wrote another sonnet titled "Written in commemoration of a walk to the beach at Slade;" underneath the title, he has written the names of the three participants in a box, as though keeping them close together: "Tamsine, Maria + BB."[89] And Mary inscribed verse that Sarah composed "On seeing a Pen which Tamsine found on the beach among the Seaweed after a very stormy night. The pen had ink about it. The sea was very rough Saturday Jan 4th 1817."[90] Here Sarah captures an image that aligns the group's perennial themes—the ocean, writing, and death—three topics that the group knit through so many lines of verse inspired by seaside walks and meditations on life's impermanence. In this particular poem, Sarah begins by addressing the pen's former owner—a mariner, she imagines, dead at sea:

[87] See Jones's description in *The Life of John Hamilton Reynolds*, p. 64.
[88] London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), K/MS/01/048, p. 204.
[89] LMA K/MS/01/048, p. 205.
[90] LMA K/MS/01/058, p. 131.

> Oh Mariner if thou hast lost thy home
> If thou art wandering in another Sphere
> Let thy flown spirit hither quickly roam
> and teach regret to write thy memory here

Sarah memorializes the imagined sailor with a cenotaphic meditation on how the act of writing performs a kind of memory work. Here, Sarah commemorates the imagined sailor and his acts of writing that are lost to the sea, while, underneath the poem, Maria commemorates the occasion: "Written after a delightful walk to the beach M.P.L." The group's verse returns to the *topos* of inscribing the body with pen and paper as an act of remembrance against the "fleeting hours,"[91] as Sarah wrote in Thomazine's collection.

While published album verse tended to be written (begrudgingly) by men for women,[92] the coterie in Sidmouth often thwarted these trends. There is a welcome rebuke of gendered norms in these collections. Rather than bemoaning the decline of literature at the hands of lady's albums, Bailey, Reynolds, and Rice embraced the tradition as equally deserving of men's attention. Another page records verse Reynolds wrote to his friend Rice. He pens a familiar plea for remembrance, and hopes that the lark's sound at daybreak will recall their friendship:

> When the morning is first in the blushing East waking
> And the lark in the fresh air is drying his wing…
>
> Then think on the friend who is far from thy sight
> Who is happy when with thee and sad when away
> He would love to be near at the earliest light
> With the friend of his soul o'er the mountains to stray.[93]

At the bottom of the page, Thomazine notes the moment Reynolds wrote this verse, and enshrines it for future readers, because, as she admits, she can never forget her friend: "J.R. wrote this 24th April 1815 just before dinner, however, there is no memorial required to ~~fix~~ stamp him indelibly on our memory and hearts."[94] Thomazine's note frames the poem in a moment of sociality. Here, she contrasts different forms of writing—that done with the pen and the other inscribed through

[91] LMA K/MS/01/046, p. 36.
[92] See Matthews, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture*, esp. ch. 4.
[93] LMA K/MS/01/048, pp. 238–239.
[94] LMA K/MS/01/048, p. 239.

memory. The Leigh sisters' commonplace books enfold an embodied and situational knowledge. Their collections value emotion and communality as epistemically salient. For example, poems like Sarah Leigh's "Lines written to a Sister on presenting her with a Lock of hair" foregrounds the body and meditates on the kind of knowledge it contains. A cut lock of hair retains its "hue," in contrast to a future when age will gray her hair.

> Oh when these locks were of this hue
> This heart was then to childhood true
> But time hath made their colour borrow
> A ray of something touching sorrow

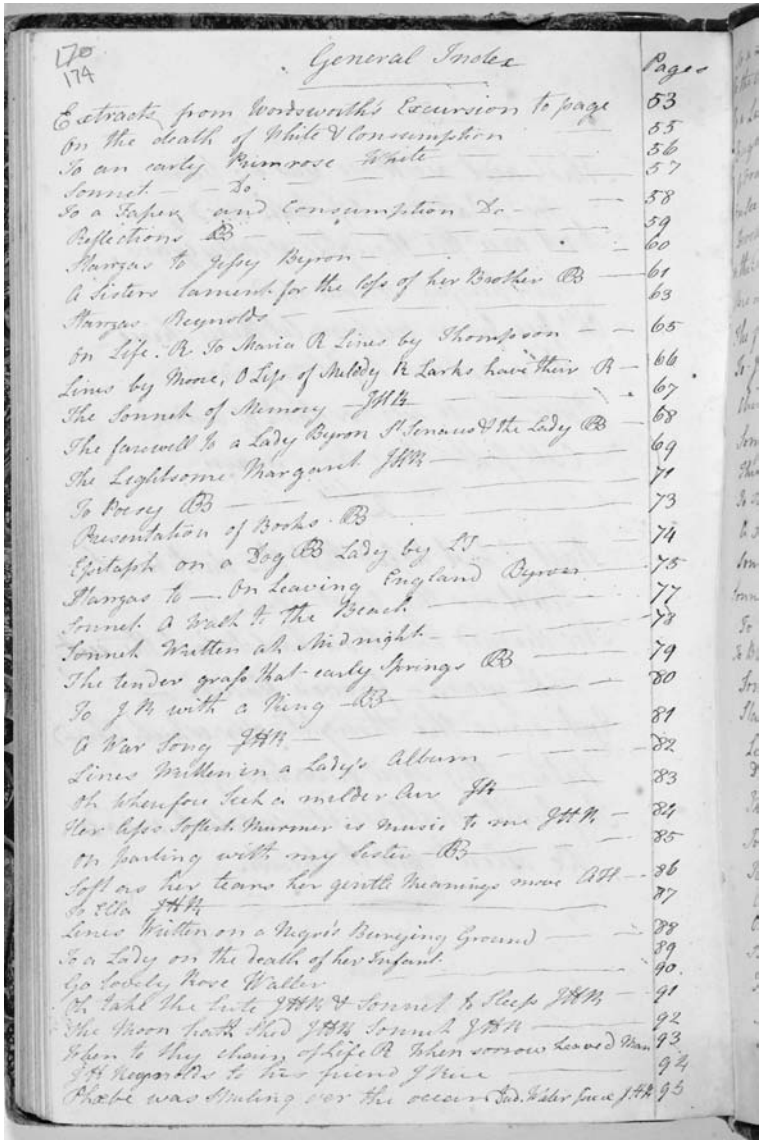
This poem is both a repository of emotion and embodiment as it preserves both Sarah's hair and handwriting. To further establish the living bodies of writer and recipient, the poem's last stanza marks its date and depicts the scene of gift-giving:

> Tuesday night October 15- 1816 sitting with
> Dear Tamsine who is the form of friendship
> From whom may I ever borrow my
> Morning and my evening happiness[95]

In addition to being consciously social productions, the group's verse also establishes the body as a vehicle of knowledge and understands emotion to be epistemically powerful. The evidence of these social commonplace books suggests that many commonplacers imagined that they were collecting people primarily, and poetry secondarily. Consider Maria's "General Index." Far from the Lockean tradition of organizing topics, Maria orders entries chronologically and with a focus on people. She lists titles followed by their author. As most of the entries were written by members of the coterie, she only includes initials: BB, JHR, JR, SPL. For instance, Maria indexes the poem to the lost mariner with the first sentence and its author's initials: "Oh Mariner if thou has lost thy home SPL."[96] (See Figure 5.3.)

Susan Stewart's theorization of the souvenir helpfully illuminates the kind of work the friends expected their verse to do. As Stewart explains, the souvenir "is by definition incomplete," which allows it to be

[95] LMA K/MS/01/051, p. 48. [96] LMA K/MS/01/058, p. 175.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General Index
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Extracts from Wordsworth's Excursion to page 53
On the death of White V Consumption 55
To an early Primrose White 56
Sonnet — Do 57
To a Taper and Conqumption Do 58
Reflections BB 59
Stanzas to Jessy Byron 60
A Sisters Lament for the loss of her Brother BB 61
Stanzas Reynolds 63
On Life. R. To Maria R Lines by Thompson 65
Lines by Moore, O Life of Melody R Larks have their R 66
The Sonnet of Memory JHH 67
The farewell to a Lady Byron St Senans & the Lady BB 68
The Lighsome Margaret JHH 69
To Percy BB 71
Presentation of Books BB 73
Epitaph on a Dog BB Lady by W 74
Stanzas to — On Leaving England Byron 75
Sonnet A Walk to the Beach 77
Sonnet Written at Midnight 78
The tender grass that early Springs BB 79
To J H with a Ring BB 80
A War Song JHH 81
Lines Written in a Ladys Album 82
Oh when you seek a milder Air JH 83
Her Lips to Soft Parent Murmer is Music to me JHH 84
On parting with my Sister BB 85
Soft as her tears her gentle Meanings move BH 86
To Ella JHH 87
Lines Written on a Negro's Burying Ground 88
To a Lady on the death of her Infant 89
To Isabella Rose Waller 90
To take the Lute JHH & Sonnet to Sleep JHH 91
The Moon hath Shed JHH Sonnet JHH 92
When to the chain of life R When sorrow Leaved Man 93
JH Reynolds to his friend J Rice 94
Phebe was Smiling for the occasion Sad Wilder Face JH 95

FIGURE 5.3 Maria Pearse Leigh's Index, London Metropolitan Archives K/MS/01/058. Image courtesy of Keats House, City of London.

"supplemented by a narrative discourse."[97] Just as a small model of the Eiffel Tower is not the structure itself, so Sarah's handwriting is not Sarah's body—even as it intimates a former physical closeness. Sarah's poem, like so much album verse, imagines a time in the future when Thomazine might read her handwriting as a manifestation of love. This verse marks Thomazine's commonplace book as a personal collection—one which exceeds the value of the book itself. As Stewart explains while discussing scrapbooks and other types of mementos: "These souvenirs absolutely deny the book's mode of mechanical reproduction" because "you cannot make a copy of a scrapbook without being painfully aware that you possess a mere representation of the original."[98] In the case of the Leigh commonplace books, that is because the body's immediacy disappears through reproduction. Consider how, writing over a century later, Walter Benjamin narrates the power of physical contact when he describes placing his own hands on "two albums with stick-in pictures" that his mother had compiled as a child.[99] This description evokes a sense of hands touching through time by the power vested in personal mementos. The image of two hands reaching out is an elegiac *topos* that the next chapter will explore in more detail. Clearly these notebooks stored more than ideas; they are also archives of embodied people and the relationships they shared.

Along with commonplacing themselves, the Slade Valley coterie commonplaced their favorite authors—most of whom were their contemporaries—and transcribed many texts that are now viewed as cornerstones of Romantic literature. Maria, for example, copies "Extracts from Wordsworth's Excursion to page 53."[100] The fifth volume of Thomazine's collection (1817) contains an extract from one of Hazlitt's essays in which he claims that the "habitual study of poetry and works of imagination is one chief part of a well-grounded education."[101] As if in response to Hazlitt's recommendation, in September of 1816, Thomazine transcribes John Keats's poem, "To Charles Cowden Clarke." Here, Thomazine has underlined the phrase, "And drop like hours into Eternity"—a line that emphasizes the album's thematic interest in

[97] Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 136. [98] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 139.
[99] Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 66.
[100] LMA K/MS/01/058, p. 174. [101] LMA K/MS/01/050, p. 145.

mortality and preserving a bit of oneself in album verse.[102] (This also recalls Queen Victoria's vigorous underlining of sections of *In Memoriam*, discussed in the next chapter.) And Keats and Hazlitt were not just literary figures but living authors befriended by the male members of the group. Upon meeting Hazlitt, John Hamilton Reynolds wrote to Mary Leigh to confesses his admiration. Reynolds writes that the great essayist was "full of eloquence . . . warm, lofty, & communicative on everything imaginative . . . " Reynolds assumes Mary might be interested in his character sketch because they had read Hazlitt's essays together:

> I fear you will be tired with this long personality, but I remember having read a few papers of his to you, and therefore imagine that you will not be wholly uninterested in him. What a fine hour was that in your room with Eliza,[103] Maria & yourself!—Do you remember it? I have not forgotten a single slope, brake, or tree, which feasted my eyes when I was sojourning at your green, romantic & sea-crowned home . . . [104]

Reynolds describes Hazlitt, the man, as an accompaniment to the prose they had read and transcribed. For Reynolds and his friends, commonplace books recalled relationships because they were often compiled in company.[105] For this group, sharing literature conveyed affection; thus, it is not surprising to find that flirtation motivated many entries in the commonplace books.

Benjamin Bailey, in particular, was infatuated with Thomazine. Biographers have pointed out that when Keats wrote that Bailey "was very much cut up about a little Jilt," he might have been referring to Thomazine (though this is debatable). Hudnall points to verses Bailey penned in Thomazine's commonplace books as proof of Bailey's interest: "I love, I plead in vain"; "Tis past! I am now thy friend."[106] Bailey showed his affection by making commonplace books for Thomazine,

[102] LMA K/MS/01/050, p. 146.

[103] Eliza Drewe sometimes joined the group at Slade Valley and would eventually marry Reynolds.

[104] Reynolds, *Letters*, p. 9.

[105] Reynolds kept another shared commonplace book once he married. See Paul Kaufman. "The Reynolds–Hood Commonplace Book: A Fresh Appraisal," *Keats–Shelley Journal* 10 (Winter 1961): 43–52.

[106] Hudnall, "Leigh Browne-Lockyer Collection," p. 16.

complete with alphabetical indexes and his own original poetry. Reading through Bailey's entries in the Leigh sisters' commonplace books reveals, as Hudnall explains, that "he soon acquiesced in the role of friend and brother to all the girls . . . "[107] Still, it was Bailey's affection for Thomazine that likely motivated the group's practice of commonplacing. Bailey had kept a Lockean commonplace book, which he fit with two indexes: he indexed general topics in the front and particular topics in the back of the book. In later years, he would return to pages and leave comments. For example, on a page obviously influenced by Lockean epistemology, Bailey meditates under the general topics "Logic" or "Independence of Mind." He begins with reference to Locke's distinction between simple and complex ideas. However, Bailey proceeds to argue that though ideas might be original, they are still dependent on "the almighty for giving him the faculty of perception" as well as "the object that caused the idea." He signs this entry "B(ailey)." Years later he returns to this page and pencils in a note explaining that while "these speculations were written some years ago . . . the confused way of reasoning and the unpolished language will plainly testify; yet I think there is some truth in them."[108] Bailey's meditations reflect an understanding of knowledge as situational, claiming that our understanding of the world is filtered through our perceptions. At the same time that he was creating his own commonplace books, Bailey constructed others for Thomazine. He gave the first collection he made for her a title page, much like those found in printed commonplace books, with epigraphs on productive reading penned by Bacon and Milton. (See Figure 5.4.) It is likely that Bailey gifted this book to Thomazine because she has written her married name on the inside cover: "T. Carslake." Bailey follows the title page with a "Preface" in which he explains that he intends this collection as a kind of education in great literature:

> The following selections are from authors, which have lain within my more serious enquiries of the last year. They are intended for the perusal of those, among whom studies the original may not naturally fall. I have enclosed in the few extracts, which space would allow, from each, to give something of the character of the several writers.[109]

[107] Hudnall, "Leigh Browne-Lockyer Collection," p. 17.
[108] LMA K/MS/01/044, pp. 113–114.
[109] LMA K/MS/01/045, p. i.

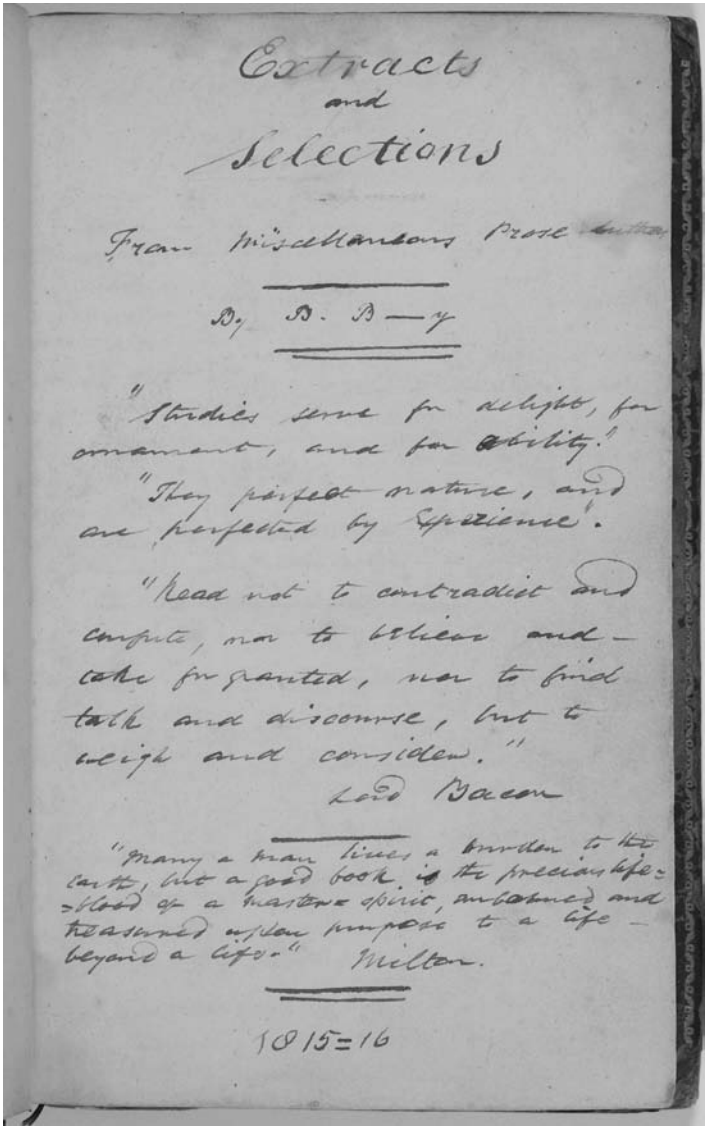
Extracts
and
Selections
From Miscellaneous Prose Writers
By B. B—y
"Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability."
"They perfect nature, and are perfected by Experience".
"Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider."
Lord Bacon
"many a man lives a burden to the earth, but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured upon purpose to a life beyond a life." Milton.
1815-16

FIGURE 5.4 Title page for the Commonplace Book Benjamin Bailey made for Thomazine Leigh; London Metropolitan Archives K/MS/01/045. Image courtesy of Keats House, City of London.

As a personalized anthology, Bailey intended this book to be "the beginning of a series of Prose Common-place books." Like other editors of anthologies, he acknowledges that the collection does not contain as much as he would have liked.

Bailey also began another collection designed explicitly for Thomazine, inscribed "From a friend & brother."[110] He titles it "Extracts from Various Authors | Vol. I," and describes the contents as immortal flowers, a "wreath of blooming flowers | whose lustre fades not with the fading hours."[111] He locates immortality in verse and offers it to "T.L . . . . For her, whose soul breathes softly as the lyre."[112] Bailey fills the following pages with extracts from Moore, Burns, and Tighe, as well as a sonnet from Petrarch translated by Ms Smith and an extract from Shakespeare's *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, which Bailey describes as "Parting of two lovers" in the index. This would be the first of Thomazine's five volumes of "Extracts from Various Authors." In "Volume 2," she continued Bailey's format:[113] she includes selections from Byron's "Childe Harold" and verse written by Burns, Moore, and Bailey which she would index in the back of the book. The first page includes album verse written by Thomas Moore: "There is one leaf reserved for me, | From all thy sweet memorials free . . ." The same verse also appears in Maria's album under the title "Written on the Blank-Leaf of a Lady's Common-place Book." Moore's verse sets up the metonymic relationship between writing one's name on a leaf of paper and inscribing remembrance in the owner' mind. Underneath Moore's verse, Sarah writes her own rhymed quatrain that attempts a similar figuration of the page as memorial:

> And when you ope' this little book
> And steal a glance across this page
> Remember on a heart you look
> That will be yours from youth to age[114]

This verse, typical of Romantic-era albums, locates presence within handwriting. The power in entries like Sarah's come from the overlay of meditations on handwriting written out by hand. In other words,

[110] LMA K/MS/01/046.
[111] LMA K/MS/01/046.
[112] LMA K/MS/01/046.
[113] LMA K/MS/01/047.
[114] LMA K/MS/01/047.

samples of handwriting were not quite as powerful without personalized meta-musings typical of albums. Given all of this, it is no wonder that collections of thumbprints, marketed as the new social media later in the century, failed to capture the emotional import of handwritten album verse.

Thumb-O-Graphs: The New Signature

> The latest and newest form of science and amusement is to collect imprints of thumbs.
>
> *Thumb-O-Graphs*

The album and coterie commonplace books of the early nineteenth century thrived in a media environment that revered handwriting as a mark of authenticity. The new technologies of the nineteenth century, however, swiftly destabilized handwriting's privileged position. Typewriters, for example, proliferated, and soon many homes had their own mini printing press. Typewriters added another level of mediation to writing—what typists gained in neat print, they lost in its connection to individuality. New technologies lessened writers' reliance on handwriting and in their stead, substituted new, mechanical traces of the hand. For example, Arthur Conan Doyle hinges one of Sherlock Holmes's discoveries on a typewriter. In "The Adventure of a Case of Identity," the master detective claims: "It is a curious thing . . . that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man's handwriting." If the machine is not new, he explains, "some letters get more worn than others, and some wear only on one side"[115] making it so that every typewriter has its identifying mark. Following centuries of attention to handwriting, Doyle plays on his readers' expectation of machines as uniform.

It was also around this time that new forensic science elevated the fingerprint as a unique mark of identification. By 1901, Scotland Yard instated the first "Fingerprint Bureau." Although fingerprints were used as identification markers as early as 1858 by Sir William Herschel

[115] Arthur Conan Doyle, "Adventure III.—A Case of Identity," in *The Strand Magazine* (London: Burleigh Street, Strand, 1891), p. 256.

in India, Francis Galton popularized the technique with his 1892 pamphlet, *Finger Prints*.[116] Here, he advocates for a "lucrative" partnership between fingerprinting and photography, if photographers could convince "customers to have prints taken of one or more of their fingers, and enlarged photographs of those prints supplied to them. The object would be to have an unchangeable personal record in a clearly legible form, that will ever after serve as a sure means of identification."[117] Galton's argument entwines photography with fingerprinting as technologies with similar goals; perhaps it was no accident that the rise of fingerprinting followed shortly after the rise of photography. At the same time, a campaign was underway to normalize fingerprinting so that it could be better incorporated into police practices. Fingerprints offered "an (almost) infallible and succinctly stored proof of identity" for criminal cases.[118]

One of the more popular strategies for "domesticating" fingerprinting was the book, *Thumb-O-Graphs*, printed by Dow and Lester in London. Craig Robertson suggests that these books were meant to instruct users to view thumbprints alongside photographs as a way to "visually remember friends and family."[119] The book's title page also announces itself as a technology of memory as it claims, "We'll note you in our Booke of Memory." With the archaic spelling of book, the editors cast this collection as part of an established, familiar tradition, insinuating that an early modern *Album Amicorum* might feature thumbprints. Attempting to initiate a new generation of would-be lady's-album compilers, *Thumb-O-Graphs* came with a box of ink and instructions, "press the thumb on the pad and then on the page." To us, these instructions seem absurd, but they suggest how foreign the very idea of fingerprints were at the end of the nineteenth century. Each

[116] See Sir William James Herschel, *The Origin of Finger-Printing* (London: Oxford University Press, 1916).

[117] Francis Galton. "Finger Prints." *The American Annual of Photography and Photographic Times Almanac (1887–1902)*. New York, United States: Center for Research Libraries, (January 1, 1894): 218

[118] Haia Shpayer-Makov, *The Ascent of the Detective: Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 50.

[119] Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 241.

thumb would be accompanied by its owner's dated signature. Thumbprints, it would seem, still required handwriting's authenticating mark.

Though a fingerprint's swirls could represent a unique identity, it was a poor substitute for handwriting—fingerprints were merely biological, foreclosing any access to the owner's internal world. The thumbprint proved a blunter tool than handwriting, which had benefited from centuries of meditation on its significance. Even if the fingerprint also marked a unique presence, it appeared coldly bureaucratic. The *Thumb-o-Graph*, therefore, enjoyed a far shorter life span than the lady's album. Ultimately, the hand that grasps another in a handshake and the hand that writes carried more symbolic weight than a thumbprint. The next chapter will take up the hand (once more) as a representation of the absent body in elegiac verse.

6

Commonplace Books of Mourning

If we cast back our remembrance to Jane Smithson, whose commonplace book began this history, we will find the remains of a flower plucked from her grave and pasted into her collection. Picked nearly 200 years ago, little of the flower remains: the petals have disintegrated to skeletal relics and the stem has fallen off, yet each left its outlines imprinted on the page, a ghostly presence that signals the flower that once was and the ravages of time on organic matter.[1] This flower, like the woman whose handwriting fills subsequent pages, is both present and absent (see Figure 6.1). In this, the final chapter, I argue for the cultural resonance of such an extract as I explore strategies of mourning associated with commonplace books. Every culture finds ways to mourn its dead; the Victorians turned to extractions. Whether a pressed flower or a sample of handwriting, mourners built a sense of presence using the same logic underpinning album culture discussed in the previous chapter. In fact, album culture had almost primed the commonplace book to become a kind of *memento mori*, a space that anticipates death with an accompanying faith in immortality. After all, poetry "fades not with the fading hours"[2] as Benjamin Bailey writes in Thomazine Leigh's collection. The previous chapter argued that commonplace books were socially resonant spaces, where friends imagined, recorded, and negotiated relationships. Collections kept by the "Sisterhood of Slade," for example, reflect a culture of shared reading and writing practices; throughout,

[1] For a beautiful meditation on the intertwined functions of lyric and picked flowers, see Andrew Stauffer *Book Traces: Nineteenth-Century Readers and the Future of the Library*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), especially ch. 2.

[2] LMA K/MS/01/46.

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums.
Jillian M. Hess, Oxford University Press. © Jillian M. Hess 2022. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895318.003.0007

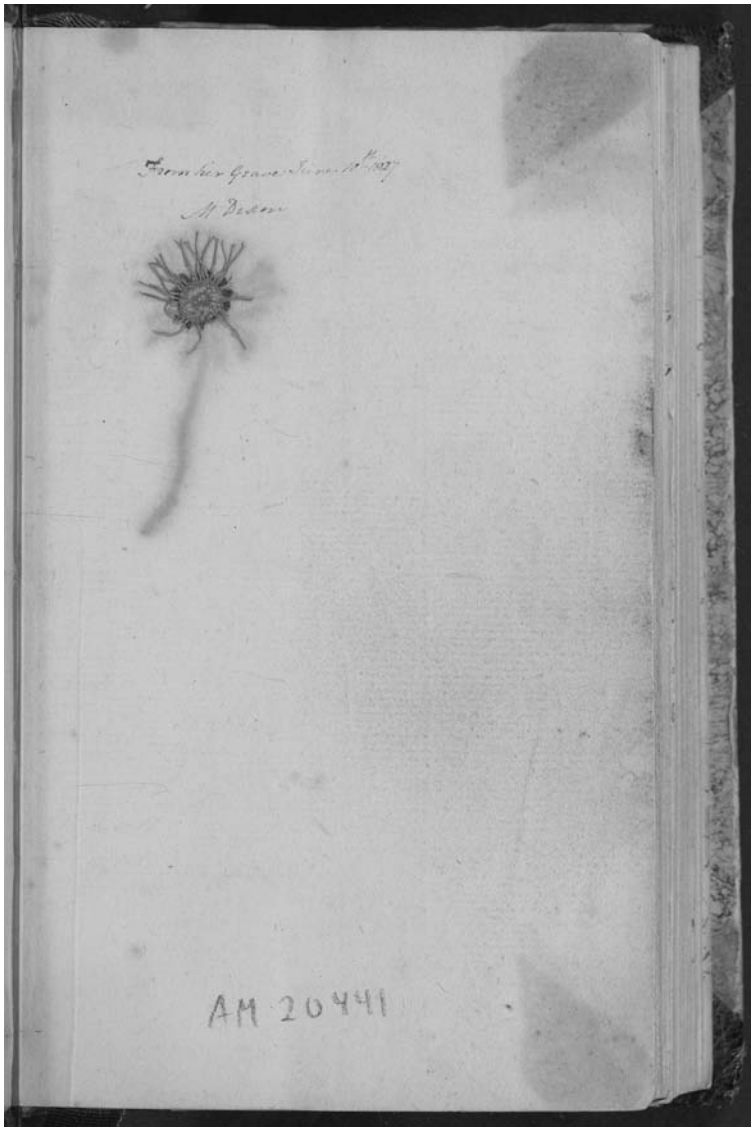

FIGURE 6.1 Inside cover of Jane Smithson's commonplace book with pressed flower from her grave, 1797–1825, C0199 no. 980. Courtesy of Princeton University Library.

they wrote entries in each other's commonplace books that acknowledge death's inevitability. Similarly, Keats's handwriting and Milton's hair serve as examples of how Romantics and Victorians kept metonymic representations of a person's body. Here, I extend this argument to consider how mourners turned to the commonplace tradition to build a sense of presence by deploying tropes of representation developed at the intersection of album and commonplace-book cultures.

Victorian mourners found a template for grief in the period's verse, especially Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*—a poem that assembles a litany of commonplaces drawn from elegy's long history. Countess Avebury put it well when she wrote to a friend, "Do you love 'In Memoriam'? I do. It just expresses all one feels at different times—wanting to believe oh so much—doubting terribly and yet feeling trust in a power that seems to have made us believe in immortality and therefore could not annihilate affection."[3] *In Memoriam*, as Countess Avebury explained, captures the uneasy kinship between science and religion for Victorian thinkers, who, like Tennyson, acknowledged advances in science that they tried to reconcile with their faith in a soul's immortality. Such an epistemology was complex to say the least, composed of empiricism and faith, the visible and invisible. As a result, many Victorians oscillated between moments of intense faith and crippling doubt. Tennyson was no different, except that he recorded his struggle to make sense of death in poetic form.

Tennyson began composing *In Memoriam* in 1833 when he learned that his closest friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, had died suddenly at the age of 22. Bereaved, the poet recorded extracts and memories associated with Hallam into long, thin blank books that butchers traditionally used to account for profits and losses; accordingly, these manuscripts became known as Tennyson's Butcher's Books.[4] The structure of these

[3] Countess Avebury to Kate Courtney, February 7, 1914. Courtney Collection, vol. 11, fols. 7–9. Cited in Patricia Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 283.

[4] Two of the so-called Butcher's Books remain: one is in the Lincoln Central Library and the other is in Cambridge's Trinity College Library. Harvard University's Houghton Library holds other notebooks that contain drafts of *In Memoriam*. Joseph Sendry suggests, "Tennyson used his larger manuscripts, the butcher's books, to bring together the pieces that he had accumulated elsewhere and to fit them into a larger design," see "Tennyson's 'Butcher's Books' as Aids to Composition," *Victorian Poetry* 11, no. 1 (1973): 58.

books mirrored the form of the poem developing inside of them. As a poet, he arranged commonplaces within rhymed tetrameter quatrains that multiplied to become the great elegy of the Victorian age we now know as *In Memoriam*. For the most part, the poem's composition mirrors its final form.[5] In their structure and their content, the Butcher's Books incorporate elements of the commonplace-book tradition: Tennyson used these books to collect and organize commonplaces of death and mourning alongside fractured memories of Hallam and partial representations of his friend's body.

While Coleridge organized notes by the workings of his own mind and Faraday organized extracts chronologically, Tennyson (with his poetic ambition) wrote out commonplaces in stanzas, which he treated as units of organization, separated by empty space. By writing in short quatrains, he could linger on the empty spaces left between thoughts—the divisions that create a stanza. And while prosody performs its own acts of cutting—by dividing language into literary forms—Tennyson emphasized carving as a theme. The Butcher's Books highlight how cutting (stanzas, for example), despite its violent connotations, proved to be generative: the butcher disassembles a carcass and transforms it into nourishment. Likewise, Tennyson arranged worn-out commonplaces to form a spiritually recuperative poem. Absorbing others' ideas, he acknowledges his commonplaces as such, even as he rejects and recirculates them. Given Romanticism's legacy of invention—and stricter copyright laws—rewriting derivative thoughts only made sense if they were put to use towards an original composition.

Tennyson's Butcher's Books are both commonplace book and draft because, as a poet, Tennyson chose to organize his extracts in stanzas. Often, Tennyson's friends and family referred to his "elegies" (*In Memoriam*'s original title) with reference to his Butcher's Books. In 1845, Edward Fitzgerald reported that he had seen his friend who "was looking well . . . and had got two hundred lines of a new poem in a butcher's book."[6] When Tennyson couldn't find his collection he wrote

[5] For a detailed study of Tennyson's composition process see Susan Shatto and Marion Shaw, "Introduction," in Alfred Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

[6] Edward FitzGerald, *Letters of Edward FitzGerald* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 1: 194.

to his friend Coventry Patmore asking if he had seen "a long, butcher-ledger-like book?"[7] Clearly, the form of Tennyson's manuscripts were an integral part of composing *In Memoriam*, which, like a butcher's ledger-book, calculates loss and gain, attempting to turn Hallam's death into poetic profit. The Butcher's Books' narrow form suited lists of purchases and mathematical equations, as well as the compact lines of *In Memoriam*, with its repetition of the so-called *In Memoriam* stanza. Composed in iambic tetrameter, the stanzas themselves are short in width (just four measures per line), but long in length as they accumulate, one after another in groupings of 133 sections. This chapter brings Tennyson's composition of *In Memoriam* into conversation with other mourning practices recorded in nineteenth-century commonplace books. Written in an era of commonplace-book compilation, *In Memoriam* absorbs the fragmented nature of the form, and offers a narrative of loss and healing that assembles a whole out of diverse parts. Moreover, *In Memoriam* helps us understand the larger cultural *topoi* surrounding death in the Victorian period, as well as coping strategies that were perfected in albums and commonplace books.

Audrey Tennyson's "Talks and Walks" and "Illness, etc."

Audrey Tennyson, the poet's daughter-in-law, began a manuscript titled "Talks and Walks" in 1870. She records the poet's thoughts on a range of subjects, including celebrity ("The amount of newspaper attention poets get nowadays would be enough to prevent me from putting forward any poetry at all if I were beginning now");[8] Coleridge's opium addiction ("S. T. Coleridge drove all his family away from him . . . It was said nobody could write so well about duty, but he couldn't perform a single duty");[9] and King Arthur ("I believe the existence of King Arthur to be more or less mythical . . ").[10] She also transcribes his reflections on religion and

[7] Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr, *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1851–1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1. 297–298.

[8] Audrey Tennyson, *Talks and Walks*, Tennyson Archives, Lincoln Central Library, pp. 20–21.

[9] *Talks and Walks*, p. 20.

[10] *Talks and Walks*, p. 24.

science: "I must believe in the immortality of the soul in face of all the Huxleys and Frederich Harrisons of the day who would sacrifice all faith or rather hope at the cold altar of Truth or what they chose to call Truth."[11] An expectation of Tennyson's death serves as the implicit subject of Audrey's collection, and she records extracts from conversations that would become exceedingly valuable after the poet laureate's death. Indeed, Audrey's husband (Tennyson's son) Hallam would mine this collection for phrases and anecdotes to supplement his memoirs about his father. Audrey maintains a small presence in her own collection, revealing herself to be witness and scribe in parenthetical comments that mark entries' topics: "(Talking of women's rights) Woman may be just as great and capable as man, only she must not set herself in opposition to him."[12] She also describes the context for specific remarks. For example: "(Pointing to a little square bandbox of a house driving from Totland Bay) I call that little house the meanest thing on earth . . .".[13] Quite remarkably, Audrey reanimates the poet's hand through language as, once again, Tennyson points at a house. As the next section will explore, the disembodied hand was a salient elegiac trope, and one which Tennyson deployed throughout *In Memoriam* in the form of grasping hands—sometimes enjoined, other times meeting nothing but air.

Audrey Tennyson began another collection of extracts—"Illness, etc."—to chronicle the poet laureate's passing. With great attention to detail, Audrey records her father-in-law's last moments: how he yearned to read the book of Shakespeare that lay beside him, but how he barely had the strength to open its pages. Finally, Audrey records the moment Tennyson died—when Dr Dabbs said, "I think there is one more breath to come" and how "after what seemed a long silence came a little sharp, short breath at 1-35 am by Dr. Dabb's watch, and our darling had entered his Eternal Home & we rose and left him in the moonlit room."[14] Audrey renders Tennyson's death-scene in a haunting tableau that would be reproduced in newspaper articles announcing the poet's death. Many of these articles, however, erase Audrey from the scene.[15] One particularly touching illustration, which appeared in *The Illustrated*

[11] *Talks and Walks*, p. 5.
[12] *Talks and Walks*, p. 5.
[13] *Talks and Walks*, p. 24.
[14] Audrey Tennyson, *Illness, etc.* Tennyson Archives, Lincoln Central Library, p. 22.
[15] "Facts and Faces," *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, October 15, 1892. British Library Newspapers, p. 243.

London News, depicts Tennyson's characters (the Lady of Shallot, Ulysses, King Arthur) descending through the moonlit window to greet the poet as only two living male figures (presumably Dr. Dabbs and Hallam) look upon the death bed.[16] (Incidentally, this image would be cut and pasted into one of several folio scrapbooks the Tennyson family compiled to document the poet's death.[17]) Audrey, as obscured scribe, records the daily happenings surrounding her father-in-law's death, offering a glimpse into private practices of mourning. In this notebook, she also describes how Hallam buried his father with that beloved copy of Shakespeare, and the following note:

> Placed here by me Hallam Tennyson in memory of my Father's devotion to Shakespeare, which showed itself up to the hour of his death by his having a copy of Shakespeare on his bed so as to feel it when he was too weak to read it. One of his last acts was to open it half consciously and the corner of the page was turned down by my wife where he had opened it. On looking at the page afterwards I found that he had opened it at one of the 3 passages which he used to call the tenderest in Shakespeare
>
> Hang there like fruit my soul
> Till the tree dies
>
> One of the last things he said was "I opened it."[18]

Hallam's letter seems to have been written for future readers. In its strangely historical tone, it reads as a report of his father's last moments, albeit one that would be interred with its subject. Thus, Tennyson was buried with not only his son's letter, but his beloved book of Shakespeare. If the image of a book, a manuscript letter, and a body buried together—and consequently decaying together—seems particularly Victorian in its learned morbidity, it might also present a fitting metaphor for the relationship between literary texts and death in the period—particularly the ways that when the two combined, a process of fracture and fusion took place as both the dead body and the text were refracted and reimagined through one another.

[16] "The Late Lord Tennyson: The Last Idyll," *The Illustrated London News*, October 22, 1892. The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842–2003.
[17] Tennyson Research Centre, Lincolnshire Archives.
[18] Audrey Tennyson, *Illness, etc.*

Like the commonplace books, scrapbooks, and albums I have discussed in previous chapters, Tennyson's coffin reads as another technology of assemblage, collecting the poet's remains (bits of poetry, a letter). Accretive in nature, Victorian mourning practices filled the emptiness left by the dead. And while the Victorian period has long been known for its habits of accumulation—the curiosity cabinet, the museum, the empire—these more private acts of mourning demonstrate how cultures of collecting seeped into the more intimate moments of a person's life. Mourners collected fragmented memories of the dead in an attempt to construct a sense of presence.

"A Hand that Can be Clasp'd no More"

A history of *In Memoriam* unfolds in commonplace books. Before Tennyson published his elegy, his friends were writing its stanzas into their collections. John Moore Heath, Tennyson and Hallam's college friend, began a notebook in 1832, where he transcribed verse written by friends including Tennyson and Hallam.[19] A year later, after Hallam died, Heath continued to transcribe poetry written by his dead friend interspersed with pre-publication extracts from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Interweaving stanzas written by Hallam with Tennyson's elegiac meditations on his friend's death recalls a scene of one hand reaching for another absented hand. In Heath's commonplace book, at least, the two friends can reside side by side, represented by their verses and joined by their mutual friend's hand(writing)—as though offering a resolution to *In Memoriam*'s "dark house" stanzas:

> Dark house, by which once more I stand
> Here in the long unlovely street,
> Doors, where my heart was used to beat
> So quickly, waiting for a hand,
> A hand that can be clasp'd no more—[20]

[19] The manuscript is held by the Fitzwilliams Museum, Cambridge. For more on this commonplace book, see Sir Charles Tennyson, "'Tennyson Papers, II: JM Heath's Commonplace Book,'" *Cornhill Magazine* 153 (1936): 426–429.

[20] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, VII, 1–5. This was one of the last stanzas Tennyson composed. See John D. Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age: The Presence of the Past in Victorian Literature* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 37.

The space between stanzas visibly represents the emptiness that the living hand meets as it reaches for the "hand that can be clasp'd no more—" a line that helplessly extends into an empty margin with its final dash. Hallam's hand is simultaneously present and absent in these stanzas. The poem can never fulfill the mourner's wish to join hands with the dead; in consequence, canto VII notably breaks the logic of the "*In Memoriam* stanza" because it interrupts the hermetic seal of its ABBA rhyme scheme. In this section, Tennyson uses the classical tradition of the *paraklausithyron*, a lament outside of a lover's closed door. As Tennyson does throughout, he takes a classical form and makes it his own by focusing on the memory of a hand, reaching out from beyond the door. But this image takes on even more resonance when put into context with Hallam's family and their commonplace books.

Understandably, Tennyson's elegy overshadows the mourning practices of Hallam's family, who used commonplace books to grieve. The Hallams also enact a kind of *paraklausithyron* in manuscript by seeking closeness with the dead's handwriting. Rather than standing at a closed door, they sat before Hallam's notes. For instance, his mother Julia used one of Hallam's college notebooks as a commonplace book of mourning. She filled the pages her son had left blank with extracts from sermons ("The great truths of the gospel must be stated clearly & boldly however averse to them some minds may be…"),[21] transforming it into a sacred memorial. Hallam hardly used this notebook: he filled a few pages to plan a trip to France with friends (including Tennyson), and he covered several other pages with plans and arithmetic to divide costs. Most of his inscriptions appear on the inside pages of both book ends; in this way, the traces of his "hand" enclose his mother's transcriptions, and, with the closing of the book, join one another as two hands meeting in prayer.

Adding extracts to notebooks left behind by the dead symbolically extends the reach of a hand beyond the grave. And, as we saw in Chapter 5, the hand took on heightened metaphorical significance in life and in death—John Keats's circle was not alone in their reverence for his handwriting. Consider another Victorian example: the scientist

[21] Arthur Henry Hallam, "Hallam Papers. Vol. v a, b. Two Notebooks Used by Arthur Henry Hallam" (London, 1827–1837), BL Add 81297 B.

John Lubbock lost his wife Ellen in 1879. He turned to her diary and commonplace book and made extracts from the former to transcribe into the latter. Thus, John wrote the last entry in Ellen's commonplace book, a poem called "To Music" by Menella Bute Smedley. Instead of copying the proper title, he introduced the verse with reference to his wife: "Copied from Nelly's book 20 Dec. 79."[22] In this way, John reframes Smedley's poem as a monument to Ellen. The poem, too, reinforced the notion of Ellen's continued existence with its lines: "weep not for death! | Tis but a fever stilled." Later, Lubbock used "To Music" in his own publication, *The Pleasures of Life*; quietly, Ellen contributed to her husband's work, providing a fitting quotation on death from beyond the grave. For many mourners, the hand was one of the few anatomical parts they could imagine as recoverable because of its association with handwriting—a person's "hand" could refer to the five-fingered body part or the traces it left on a piece of paper. Paradoxically, "the hand" signals physical presence and absence, through its twin definitions: while the anatomical hand is a synecdoche for the body, handwriting can only be metonymic. In other words, the hand, both present (in the traces it left behind) and absent (because it cannot write new lines) demonstrates the entangled relationship between ellipses and metonymy. The hand, as a trope in Tennyson's poetry, simultaneously conveys Hallam's body and also the impossibility of fully recovering that body. Commonplace books of mourning like Julia Hallam's and John Lubbock's help explain how hands become rich symbolic sites for building a sense of the dead's presence, and why, by extension, Tennyson attempts to represent Hallam with his hand.

Commonplace books of mourning and *In Memoriam* sprang from a shared investment in representing the dead with whatever pieces remained. Metonymy, then, served mourners as the poetic form for substituting a part for a whole. The hand that Tennyson yearns to grasp throughout *In Memoriam*, and the handwriting left behind in commonplace books, are metonyms. So too are the letters Hallam left behind: "…those fall'n leaves which kept their green, | The noble letters of the dead."[23] Handwriting remains forever green unlike the

[22] Ellen Frances Lubbock, "Supplementary Avebury Papers. Vol. XII. Commonplace Book of Avebury's First Wife, Ellen" (London, 1877–1879), BL.

[23] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, XCV, 23–24.

leaves of nature that "redden to the fall."[24] *In Memoriam* relies on metonymy as a convention primed to account for loss and consistently asks fragments to stand in for an absent wholeness. As Susan Stewart explains, a metonymic object "all the more radically speaks to its status as a mere substitution."[25] Commonplace books of mourning must operate metonymically, given the impossibility of recuperating the whole; they offer a way to transcend the absence imposed by death, and to re-create intimacy in the face of insurmountable distance. *In Memoriam* proceeds metonymically, even though Tennyson desires synecdoche, as Irene Hsiao has argued. Tennyson's "love for Arthur is displaced onto his remains . . . to transform a fragmented relic into a living part, to make metonymy function as synecdoche does, to let a disjoined part find its way back to the whole without having to travel through the insubstantiality of human systems of connotation."[26] Throughout *In Memoriam*, Tennyson struggles to represent Hallam: "I cannot get his features right," he claims, and so Tennyson must represent his friend imperfectly and partially, as he does when describing the grave:

> Old yew which graspest at the stones,
> That name the underlying dead:
> Thy fibres net the dreamless head
> Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.[27]

This stanza presents both the grave and the corpse through metonymy: the stones represent the tomb, just as the bones represent the corpse. The yew (an ancient symbol of mourning and a nod to Gray's *Elegy*) that grasps the tomb performs the very action that Hallam's disembodied hand can never do and highlights the unmoving body that the stone marks. And through a kind of transference, Tennyson's desire to "grasp" his friend is enacted by the yew's roots. Even so, the roots entangle a fragmented body, decaying into its elemental parts.

[24] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, XI, 14.

[25] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), p. 135.

[26] Irene Hsiao, "Calculating Loss in Tennyson's in Memoriam," *Victorian Poetry* 47, no. 1 (2009): 173–96, p. 184.

[27] Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Tennyson Archives*, ed. Christopher B. Ricks and Aidan Day (New York: Garland 1986), 16.5.

Empty Pages

Many commonplace books of mourning navigate a tension between rupture and continuity, between spaces left empty because of the owner's death and spaces continued by another writer's hand. In this instance, another commonplace book from the Hallam family is illustrative. Arthur Hallam's sister, Eleanor, died three years after her brother, leaving behind a commonplace book with only seven pages filled with religious texts. After Eleanor's last entry (penned in 1837, the year of her death) there is a fourteen-page gap, a lacuna that with its silence implies the death of the book's owner. Fourteen pages later, a new hand appears: Eleanor's sister, Julia Lennard, records extracts from five letters, each focused on a relative's death. The first letter, from 1837, describes Eleanor's death; the last letter, written in 1874, describes their father's death. This particular commonplace book not only documents letters circulating over a span of nearly forty years, but how mourners would preserve loved ones' commonplace books and even return to them many decades after the owner's death to record new entries, suggesting the persistent importance of these manuscripts to those left behind. Consider one further example: when Felicia Hemans died, her sister inherited the poet's commonplace book and transcribed verse written on the occasion of the poet's death into it.[28]

The blank space in these books often communicated as much as the writing, and signaled the silence associated with death. So, it is not surprising to find Tennyson's Butcher's Books riddled with empty spaces. The emptiness of the Butcher's Books seems to anticipate new stanzas, and new combinations of verse, while it also conveys the empty center of *In Memoriam*—the subject to which it can never return even as it circles in upon itself. The empty spaces hold a stanza that can no longer be written, a stanza in which Hallam lives in the present tense. Yet there is a power and a sad pleasure in Hallam's absence because it creates space for Tennyson to construct his own narrative, his own remembrance of their friendship. As Tennyson presents Hallam through parts of his body—from his hands, to his bones, to his feet—he reconstructs a new version of the friend he "held as half-divine."

[28] BL MS Add 81299 Commonplace Book of Eleanor Hallam; Felicia Hemans, Commonplace Book, Pforzheimer Collection, NYPL FH 0050.

The empty space of the poem opens up the possibility to re-create Hallam, not as man but as myth. Indeed, this is something Tennyson admits himself. He understands that he cannot accurately represent Hallam, that he cannot really love Hallam as he did while he lived. So he confesses:

> I cannot love thee as I ought,
> For love reflects the thing beloved;
> My words are only words, and moved
> Upon the topmost froth of thought.[29]

The emptiness within the poem is theorized as part of language's inability to truly represent "the thing beloved." Throughout, Tennyson attempts to describe his friend, yet he always admits defeat because he can only access a surface interpretation—"the topmost froth of thought." There remains something deeper, more authentic, which Tennyson struggles to grasp. Reaching for Hallam's hand, then, is also reaching for its representation. The *In Memoriam* stanza encodes a process of cutting and assembling, which created the poem we read today. Tennyson did not originally compose the quatrains in their published order. And when revising the poem, he not only rearranged the stanzas, but also revised them so they would refer more broadly by taking out the first-person singular and replacing it with more general language. Doing so, he creates a poem that, while specific to his own experience of loss, also applies broadly.

The figurative and literal empty space of the elegy allows Tennyson to re-create Hallam, not as man but as myth. With their coffin-like form and through a series of appearances and vanishings, the Butcher's Books simultaneously bury and resurrect Hallam. In this way Tennyson moves beyond the imperfect representation of his friend in order to reconstruct something new, and thus writes the myth of Hallam. "The man I held as half-divine"[30] becomes fully so through the work of the poem. Canto XXI confronts resurrection explicitly by invoking the story of Lazarus, the "man raised up by Christ:"

> When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
> And home to Mary's house return'd,

[29] *In Memoriam*, LII, 1–4. [30] *In Memoriam*, XIV.

> Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
> To hear her weeping by his grave?[31]

Tennyson wonders at the power of language. Could Hallam, like Lazarus, rise in response to the poet's weeping? Do the dead have the power to hear the living? More importantly, does language have the capacity to raise the dead? Tennyson and many of his philologist friends knew that it couldn't. Like so many other *In Memoriam* stanzas, this one folds in on itself with Lazarus' silence, "... Something seal'd the lips of that Evangelist." Once again, the *In Memoriam* stanza circles back, claustrophobically, to the beginning.

The emptiness at the heart of *In Memoriam* pertains not just to a lost friend but also a confrontation with language's limitations. William A. Wilson argues that Tennyson's anxieties over language fit the concerns of Victorian philology, and that the philologists best known by the poet "analyzed the degeneration of modern discourse into rhetoric and subjectivity, denying beliefs in linguistic incarnationalism [*sic*] and progress."[32] For example, the Victorian philologist Richard Garnett claimed that names are "attributive nouns, used as a sort of synecdoche."[33] Throughout *In Memoriam*, Tennyson mourns the limitations of human language, which proves insufficient to the task of resurrecting Hallam. Tennyson's frustration appears structurally in the *In Memoriam* stanza, which coalesce and concretize something that won't progress or move forward. Language, though beautiful in itself, only returns Tennyson to where he began. In consequence, Tennyson's desire for a better tool with which to represent Hallam recurs throughout the elegy. As the next section explores, anxieties over language also inform anxieties over commonplaces and the many linguistic strategies of consolation that have structured elegy since antiquity.

[31] *In Memoriam*, XXI, 1–4.

[32] William A. Wilson, "Victorian Philology and the Anxiety of Language in Tennyson's In Memoriam," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 30, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 28.

[33] Richard Garnett, *The Philological Essays of the Late Rev. Richard Garnett, of the British Museum* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1859), p. 88.

"Common is the Commonplace"

During its long history, the elegy accumulated many *topoi* that *In Memoriam* absorbs and interrogates. Seventeenth-century elegy, as Andrea Brady reminds us, depends on commonplacing. "Writing an elegy does not require research into an individual's life so much as a trawl through the commonplaces of consolation and virtue retrieved from other poems."[34] As discussed earlier, when Thomas Gray turned to his commonplace book to compose *Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard* (1751) he was following tradition. He provided an abundance of sententiae for his readers because Gray followed the classical rhetorical pattern of the places, as John Guillory explains: "*Elegy* is indeed composed in much the same manner as a commonplace book, its sententiousness takes the strictly Aristotelian form of the enthymeme, or rhetorical syllogism, an abbreviated logic negotiating a move from the general proposition to the particular."[35] In other words, Gray began with the universal (the commonplace), from which he extrapolated individual experience. His style of including quotation and literary references, much like the cento, allowed readers to recognize their experiences in Gray's poem. Similarly, many of *In Memoriam*'s commonplaces have their origins in Greek lamentory elegies and Roman pastoral elegies. Scholars have noted how Tennyson incorporates and modernizes elegy's traditional conventions. For example, A. A. Markley outlines the conventions Tennyson takes up and extends from ancient elegies. These include a hyperbolic list of the dead lover's idealized qualities, vows of eternal love, and a highly self-conscious speaker.[36] These conventions are rhetorical commonplaces as the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* defines them: "*locus communes*, a passage of a speech dealing with a topic not peculiar to the case in hand, a general reflection." Tennyson's lines are commonplaces in both the classical and modern sense of the term: he presents them as universally applicable,

[34] Andrea Brady, *English Funerary Elegy in the Seventeenth Century: Laws in Mourning* (New York: Springer, 2006), p. 18.

[35] John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 88.

[36] A. A. Markley, *Stateliest Measures: Tennyson and the Literature of Greece and Rome* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), especially ch. 3.

but also tired clichés. However, as we have seen, Romantic authors insisted on originality and cultivated a suspicion of commonplaces that permeates Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. Schooled in romantic poetics, Tennyson grapples with a quintessentially nineteenth century question: how does one write an elegy in a world that has become suspicious of traditional commonplaces? Yet it is precisely because so many lines in *In Memoriam* are commonplaces that the poem's afterlife has been so robust, as new mourners culled commonplaces from the poem to support their own grieving process.

Commonplaces are both universal and unoriginal; thus, by questioning their value, Victorians were also eroding an epistemic foundation. If generally accepted commonplaces were worthless, where could a mourner find a foundation to express grief? This shifting epistemology followed a social anxiety over commonly shared knowledge, especially religious belief in an afterlife, that seemed at risk of crumbling under the force of new scientific discoveries. The commonplace proved to be both a conceptual stumbling block and also an irresistible mode of expression for Tennyson. In his attempt to provide a new articulation of grief, Tennyson repeats commonplaces only to find them helplessly empty.

> One writes, that "Other friends remain,"
> That "Loss is common to the race"—
> And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain.[37]

In this stanza, Tennyson's most famous statement on the commonplace, he explains how clichés proliferate during times of mourning ("common is the commonplace"). Here he presents two established sayings that offer him no route to finishing the stanza save explaining their inadequacy. Though countless writers have claimed that "other friends remain" or that "loss is common," the truth of such statements offers little comfort. Rather, as Tennyson reflects in the next stanza, the fact that these phrases are true makes them even more distressing. Death's essential commonplace nature—its inevitability—hurts, and all the traditional sayings at our disposal amount to little comfort.

[37] *In Memoriam*, VI, 1–4.

Tennyson's view of commonplaces recalls Coleridge's attempt to revive commonplaces, which "lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul," indistinguishable from "the most despised and exploded errors."[38] To revitalize commonplaces, Coleridge argues, one must *reflect* on them (see Chapter 2 for a longer discussion of Coleridge's work). While there is no evidence that Tennyson thought deeply about *Aids to Reflection*, as a member of the Apostles, he was certainly steeped in Coleridgean thought. Hallam, however, read and admired *Aids to Reflection* and confessed that it was "a theological, metaphysical, & therefore somewhat appalling volume at first sight, but amply rewarding a deeper search."[39] The larger themes that animate *Aids to Reflection* also concern *In Memoriam*'s speaker. Is language a living thing? And how does one's education help one to live life? As Donald Hair asserts, "*In Memoriam* is, among other things, about 'the formation of a Manly Character' in the speaker"—the development of virtue.[40] (Recall how Coleridge's full title was *Aids to Reflection in the Formation of a Manly Character*.) Like aphorisms, commonplaces are short, pithy, and open-ended enough to call the reader to action. For this reason, they bear a resemblance to the *In Memoriam* stanza, which repeats with predictable consistency; each stanza ends with the same rhyme with which it began, only to repeat the same process again. In this way, the form of the poem mirrors the commonplace's circular reasoning: a commonplace is true because it is commonplace. In other words, commonplaces are a quintessential aspect of *In Memoriam*'s structure because they help Tennyson elaborate the feeling of stagnation that permeates his poem. The poem's grief never progresses, and because it does not move forward, it cannot ever truly conclude. Thus, each stanza seems to end with the same sentiments expressed in Canto VI: they too are "vacant chaff well meant for grain." Nevertheless, the history of reader-engagement with *In Memoriam* would suggest quite the opposite. Readers found great consolation in Tennyson's words because they applied his stanzas to their own lived experience. In this way, readers

[38] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 11.

[39] Arthur Henry Hallam, *The Letters of Arthur Henry Hallam* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1981), p. 233.

[40] Donald S. Hair, *Tennyson's Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 120.

intuitively act upon Coleridge's suggestion to *reflect* on commonplaces "in direct reference to our own state and conduct, to our own past and future being."[41] Commonplaces remain stagnant when they continue to circulate as general truths, rather than templates for understanding particular experiences.

The Butcher's Books accumulated many commonplaces that Tennyson excised for the final version of *In Memoriam*. For example, the Trinity College manuscript contains the following tissue of commonplaces (set in the funeral scene), which Tennyson omitted from the final version:

> . . . Yet one unschool'd in want will say
> "The dead are dead & let them be."
>
> Another whispers, sick with loss:
> "O let the simple slab remain
> The Mercy Jesu in the rain
> The Miserere in the moss
>
> I love the dairy weeping dew
> I hate the trim-set plots of Art"
> My friend thou speakest from the heart
> But look, for these are nature too.[42]

Tennyson's writing changes here to evoke the medieval scribal hand upon which gothic type was modelled (see Figure 6.2).The litany of commonplaces from this section are rebuked and explicitly parodied through archaic handwriting that inscribes the Latinate prayer. These stanzas describe the gathering of commonplaces that reverberate among mourners at Hallam's funeral, who "come to see thy grave." The first commonplace "The dead are dead & let them be" is reproached for being "unschool'd" in grief, while the second disparages the way that art disciplines and confines emotion ("I hate the trim-set plots of Art"). The narrator's voice returns at the end to point out the essential commonplaceness of death ("But look, for these are nature too"), ostensibly directing his interlocutor's gaze to the "set plots" of the graves that backdrop this scene. The "set plots" of nature—the plot of a

[41] Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 9: 11.

[42] Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Butcher Book," Wren Library, Cambridge, Trinity College O.15.13, p. 44.

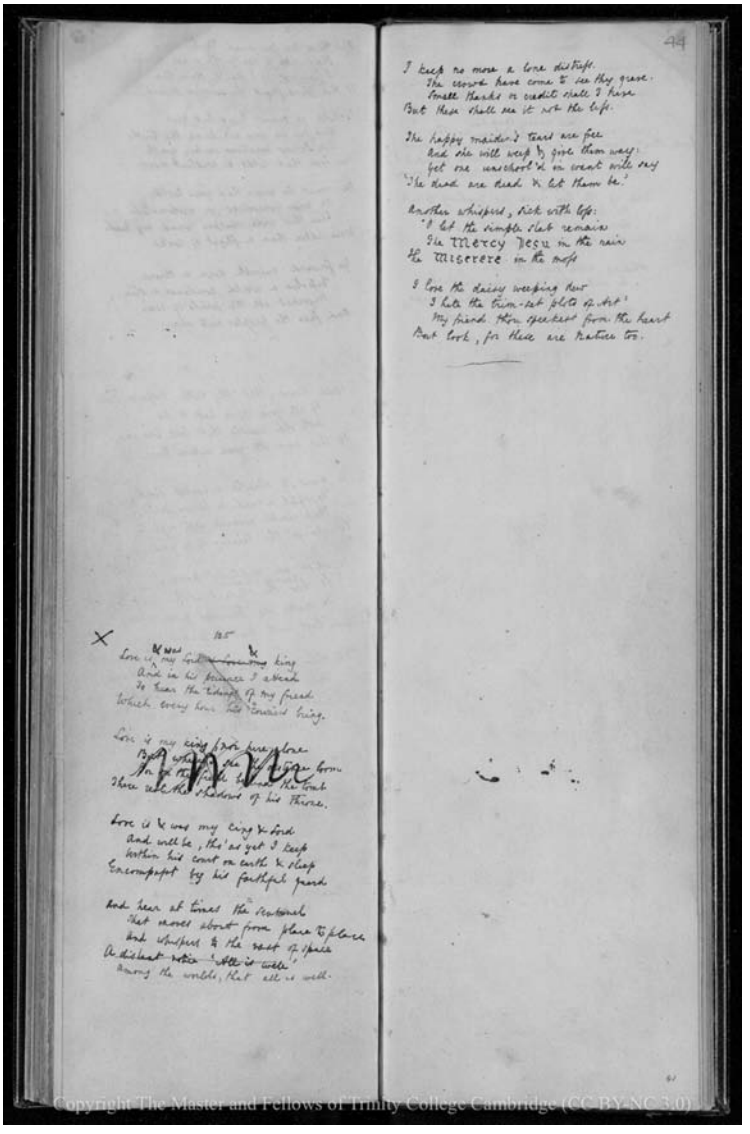
I keep no more a lock of hair.
The worms have come to see thy grave.
Small thanks to credit shall I have
But these shall see it not the less.
The happy maiden's heart are free
And she will weep & give them way;
Yet one unschool'd in worst will say
'The dead are dead & let them be.'
Another whispers, sick with life:
'I bid the simple dust remain
Till Mercy Jesus in the rain
Or Miserere in the mist
I love the daisy weeping dew
I hate the trim-set plots of Art'
My friend thou speakest from the heart
But look, for these are matters too.
Love is my King & my God
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth & sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard
And hear at times the sentinels
That moves about from place to place
And whisper to the rest of peace
In the distant voice 'All is well'
Among the worlds, that all is well.
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FIGURE 6.2 A page of commonplaces from one of Tennyson's "Butcher's Books." "In Memoriam" manuscript notebook (Trinity College O.15.13). Courtesy of The Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

single life that ends in death, as well as the natural body decomposing into earth—mirror the "set plots of Art"—the tombstone, the grave, the elegy—as confined sites of grief. In this stanza, the grave and the commonplace inscribed on it as epitaph are shown to derive from the same impulse to confine death within both natural and artistic boundaries.

Commonplaces are bounded by their dizzyingly circular logic: a statement is true because it is a commonplace, and it is a commonplace because it is true. As Tennyson explains, the commonplace nature of death makes it all the more tragic: "That loss is common would not make | My own less bitter, rather more."[43] Yet mourners always experience loss as particular, even if it is a common experience.[44] The common and the particular are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually enforcing. They appear in this poem as contradictory forces. Death is common; Hallam's death is particular. Wordsworth elaborates on the challenging but powerful nexus of particular and common that features in what he understands to be the best epitaphs: "what is most needful and most difficult in an epitaph to do; namely to give to universally received truths a pathos and spirit which shall re-admit them into the soul like revelations of the moment."[45] As Wordsworth explains, a skilled writer makes death, an undeniable commonplace, appear particular.

Beyond meditations on mortality's particularity and universality, death is an epistemic problem because even if it is universal, it is also fundamentally unknowable. No amount of poetry will reveal its secrets, and so *In Memoriam* progresses through what Isobel Armstrong describes as "a series of discrete repositionings, non sequiturs and continual rethinking and new representations of loss."[46] When he started composing *In Memoriam*, Tennyson could not envision Hallam's death as anything other than particular. Part of the work of revising his elegy

[43] *In Memoriam*, VI, 5–6.

[44] This sentiment echoes a scene in *Hamlet*, in which Gertrude tries to console her son by reminding him that death is common. *Hamlet*, 1.2.72–6.

[45] William Wordsworth, "Essays Upon Epitaphs," in *William Wordsworth: 21st-Century Oxford Authors*, edited by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 551. For more on the epitaph see Dewey S. Hall, "Signs of the Dead: Epitaphs, Inscriptions, and the Discourse of the Self," *ELH* 68, no. 3 (2001): 655–677 and Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, "The Epitaph and the Romantic Poets: A Survey," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1967): 113–146.

[46] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poets and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 257.

(and, of mourning his friend) included removing the first-person singular and replacing it with more general language. Doing so, Tennyson creates a poem that while specific to his own experience of loss applies broadly. The fact that he published it anonymously (though most knew him to be the author) further adds to the elegy's universalizing impulse. He clearly wanted his poem to transcend his own individual experience and explained that the "I" in his elegy did not always refer to him.[47] Writing in the voice of humanity, Tennyson penned universally applicable commonplaces. Although, as John D. Rosenberg remarks, "No reader doubts that it is indeed Alfred Tennyson who stands . . . outside Hallam's door."[48] Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* offers some insight into the kind of work that commonplace books do for mourners, who turn it into a *locus* for what Freud describes as an "adjustment and hyper-investment" in memory and expectation associated with the dead. In other words, it is in the commonplace book that the memory of the dead becomes rewritten under a simpler rubric, and, in time, the quotations themselves become displaced *loci* for the dead as language becomes "hyper-invested." According to Freud, such transference allows the process of mourning to end.

As *In Memoriam* progresses, Tennyson collapses the personal and the general, an individual death and species' extinction. Darwin was still at sea on the *Beagle* when Tennyson first sat down to compose *In Memoriam*, but the poet had read Huxley's account of fossils in *Principles of Geology*.[49] To Tennyson's mind, Huxley's work rejected God and with it the principle of immortality that Tennyson desperately wanted to believe in. Canto LVI represents how Tennyson fought to reconcile religious commonplaces concerning the soul's immortality with new scientific commonplaces about nature's reckless destruction, "red in tooth and claw." In giving voice to an unsympathetic nature, Tennyson manufactures new commonplaces that attempt to exert order where none exists:

[47] Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 1897), 1: 305.
[48] Rosenberg, *Elegy for an Age*, p. 38.
[49] See the discussion of *Walks and Talks* earlier in this chapter for Tennyson's reaction to Huxley.

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, "A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." . . .[50]

This imagined dialogue with nature represents two warring epistemologies, each of which roots itself in different commonplaces. Echoing Canto VI, Tennyson describes his search for God as grasping at chaff—much like the commonplaces "well meant for grain."

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.[51]

The poet is not yet willing to give up his faith, however feeble it might seem. He returns to a pre-Christian *topos* by invoking Catullus' "desolation:"[52] "Ave, Ave, Ave,"[53] and with it, the religious commonplaces that had structured elegy for millennia.

In their cultural life, commonplaces operate through a series of translations between the specific and general. First, the writer transforms a specific experience into a generally applicable phrase that might resonate with new readers who then apply it to their own particular experiences. This pattern defines *In Memoriam*'s composition as well as its afterlife. Tennyson's primary revisions on his poem within his Butcher's Books include modifying specific language to apply more generally. For example, "his hand" or "the hand" becomes "a hand."[54] With the slight change from the definite to the indefinite article, Tennyson recasts Hallam's hand as any hand, and in this way,

[50] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, LVI, 1–8. [51] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, LV, 17–20.
[52] Tennyson praised Catullus, claiming that "no modern elegy" could "equal in pathos the desolation of that everlasting farewell," *Memoir*, 2: 239.
[53] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, LVII, 15.
[54] Shatto and Shaw discuss this under the subheading "Depersonalizing the poem: verbal revisions," "Introduction," p. 25.

opens up his tableaux of a hand stretching for another hand, allowing it to apply broadly. Tennyson's readers seized the opportunity to reimagine Hallam's hand as belonging to another, by excerpting this section and recasting it in another collection of commonplaces. The commonplaces woven throughout *In Memoriam* supported the poem's rich afterlife as new mourners repurposed Tennyson's quatrains to address personal experiences. *In Memoriam*'s fungibility (like the commonplaces it circulated) allowed the verse to speak to various experiences of grief. *In Memoriam* produces commonplaces, which, while uncomfortably facile for Tennyson, prove to be definitive features of the poem's afterlife as new mourners culled commonplaces from the poem to support their own grieving process.[55] Among the most ardent devotees to Tennyson's elegy was the newly widowed, grief-stricken queen.

"The footsteps of his life in mine": Queen Victoria's *Album Consolativum*

After 1861, Queen Victoria would wear black for the rest of her life, marking her status as a widow in perpetual mourning. She reportedly told Tennyson that "next to the Bible, *In Memoriam* is my comfort."[56] The queen's extreme mourning practices are legendary, but there is one practice that has not received as much attention as the rest: two leather-bound, clasped octavo commonplace books which she used to transcribe a range of poetic extracts keyed to themes of grief, immortality, and loss.[57] Of the eighty-three literary extracts the queen copied, forty-three entries belonged to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*—some of which were subsequently underlined with a shaking pen. In her grief, Queen Victoria turned to literary quotations, as many of her contemporaries did, and mobilized the ancient tradition of the commonplace book to both nurture and document her particular process of

[55] Herbert Tucker makes a similar point in *Tennyson and the Doom of Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 378.

[56] Hallam Tennyson. *Life and Works: Alfred, Lord Tennyson; a Memoir, by His Son*. Vol. 2. London: Macmillan, 1898, p.335.

[57] A second, identical manuscript exists into which the queen wrote one entry (an extract from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *De Profundis*). The rest of the extracts are written in other hands.

mourning. Her choice of *In Memoriam* was no coincidence. Prince Albert, the husband she mourned, had loved Tennyson's poetry, and persuaded his wife to appoint the author as poet laureate.

Queen Victoria begins her *Album Consolativum* with a place and date—Osborne, January 1862—followed by five extracts from *In Memoriam*. With the location and time stamp, the queen infuses the verse she transcribes with its connection to a specific moment in her own life—just months after her husband's death. The very first stanza, which the queen not only transcribes but also vigorously underlines, offers the album's central themes (and how the queen construed *In Memoriam*).

> Whatever way my days decline,
> I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
> His being working in mine own,
> The footsteps of his life in mine;[58]

The uncanny juxtaposition of loss and presence, as portrayed in this quatrain's internal couplet (of being left alone, yet with a continuation of the dead spirit in one's own existence), is a theme that underwrites the queen's collection. In transcribing *In Memoriam*, Queen Victoria was transcribing one of Albert's favorite poems. Accordingly, *In Memoriam* has a double significance in this album: it expresses sentiments that obviously spoke to the queen's grief, but it also stands as a marker for Prince Albert's literary tastes. In this way, it emerges both as a literary object, inscribed for its aesthetic qualities, but also as a mnemonic token, appreciated for its connection to the dead. Such an overlay of meaning animates this poem and gives it new life, once its grief transfers from Hallam to Albert and the mourner it describes becomes not Tennyson, but Queen Victoria. A veritable palimpsest of mourners and the mourned thickens each line of *In Memoriam*.

Queen Victoria's album, much like other commonplace books of mourning discussed in this chapter, demonstrates how mourners used extracts to represent the dead as more perfect than they ever were, or ever could be, in life. Language proves a useful tool for the mourner

[58] Queen Victoria's *Album Consolitivum*, BL Add MS 62089, 1: 2; queen's emphasis. The British Library has digitized several pages from this manuscript. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/queen-victorias-album-consolativum-with-extracts-from-lord-alfred-tennysons-poem-in-memoriam-a-h-h>.

who wants to represent the dead within an imaginative space that need not bear a relation to reality. The drive to represent the dead in handwritten commonplace books, which we have seen in Lubbock's collection and Julia Hallam's additions to her son's notebook, is a drive to reconnect with the dead by filling in empty spaces left behind. It is also a drive to rewrite the dead according to new narratives that mourners valued because of their palliative, though not always precise, qualities. Queen Victoria constantly frames her transcribed extracts with personal references to Prince Albert. For example, as a sort of heading to her transcription of an extract from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the queen wrote: "What my darling angel practiced,"[59] which necessarily shades our interpretation of the poem's first lines: "To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it."[60] More than that, she has revitalized Tennyson's commonplace to become a specific memory of her husband. On another page, she titles an extract, from the biblical story of Solomon, "My Angel" indicating that she understood its lines to reflect Albert's death: "For his Soul pleased the Lord, therefore hasted He to take him away from among the wicked."[61] With her additions, the queen weaves a fractured narrative around her husband's death with small phrases designed to sanctify Albert. For example, after a transcription of a song Albert composed, *Lebewhol*, the queen notes: "Sung by Vickey at Berlin before she heard her beloved Father was so ill."[62] The commonplace book had always been understood as a technology of memory; in the queen's album, extracts are tied not just to ideas, but also to moments in the past. With her reflection on *Lebewhol*, the queen conjures an image of her daughter Vickey, suspended in an irrecoverable moment before Prince Albert's illness, and one of the last moments when the family was not in mourning. In this way, Queen Victoria reaches back in time as the only way to access her husband's living body. Tennyson's questions become the queen's as she writes, "Do we indeed desire the dead should still be near us at our side?" This question gets at a crucial distinction, central to commonplace books of

[59] Queen Victoria's *Album Consolitivum*, 1: 107.
[60] Queen Victoria's *Album Consolitivum*, 1: 107.
[61] Queen Victoria's *Album Consolitivum*, 1: 113; queen's emphasis.
[62] Queen Victoria's *Album Consolitivum*, 1: 109.

mourning: what kind of presence does the mourner actually desire? The man as he was or as the mourner wants him to be?

Queen Victoria, using Tennyson's poem, recreates her husband as a saint, her angel. She can do this because of the way Tennyson wrote *In Memoriam* with empty spaces—both the spaces between each stanza, and also the conceptual emptiness created by the poem's inability to come to certain conclusions about the dead. While the blank spaces offer room for revision, they also embody the terror of nothingness. Tennyson remarked to his friend, "The general way of its being written was so queer that if there were a blank space, I would put in a poem."[63] In its composition, the poem covered the abyss of a blank page, but through his writing, Tennyson also explores the terrifying emptiness left behind by death.

"The living soul was flash'd on mine"

By *In Memoriam*'s conclusion, Tennyson resigns himself to never fully representing Hallam and works himself out of mourning by transferring his desire for renewal onto a wedding ceremony. This time, the hand, now used synecdochically, belongs to the bride.

> O happy hour, behold the bride
> With him to whom her hand I gave.
> They leave the porch, they pass the grave
> That has to-day its sunny side.[64]

The hand of this section is capable of grasping and the internal couplet (gave and grave) rhymes Tennyson's act of giving his sister in marriage, with the grave that forever keeps Hallam's hand. But now the grave is flooded in sun—"Today the grave is bright for me."[65] This signals a happier turn of events, while also pointing to the best mode of representation the Victorians had: light, in the form of photography. Throughout the poem, the term "flash" expresses Tennyson's desire for representation. Importantly, it is also a word explicitly tied to early photography.

[63] Knowles, cited in Christopher B. Ricks, *Tennyson*. New York: Macmillan, 1972, p. 212.
[64] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Epilogue, 69–72.
[65] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Epilogue, 73.

In Memoriam, frustrated in its desire to resurrect Hallam, concedes to language's limitations, which mark pre-photographic mourning practices that invested in handwriting or locks of hair as metonyms for the living body. By the time the great poet died in 1892, his family had photographs and reams of newsprint, memorializing the poet laureate. Along with cheaper newsprint, photography launched a change in commonplace book form. Rather than writing words out by hand, later Victorians were far more likely to cut and paste them. Hallam, who died just as photography became more well-known, left behind no pictures. Tennyson could not create a scrapbook filled with Hallam; instead he wrote a poem that repeatedly (obsessively, even) attempts to capture Hallam's image. Yet, Tennyson's complaints about language are similar to those voiced about photography. Neither technology—whether ink or light—could measure up to reality. In fact, Victorian descriptions of photography often noted the way this new technology fractured the perceived world into unhinged pieces.[66] The same could be said for *In Memoriam*, which was so successful, at least in part, because it was anonymous and interchangeable. When Tennyson mourns, "I cannot get his features right," his complaint is similar to that of early photographers, constrained by the limitations of a still-developing technology.

There is a proleptic yearning for a photographic image of Hallam throughout *In Memoriam*. The elegy's metonymic discourse shares a twin aim with photography, which, similarly, can never capture an entity, but only associated parts. While early nineteenth-century mourners had death-masks molded from the face of the recently deceased, late Victorians had post-mortem photography. The flash was particularly important for such death-bed photography, with "the artificial light overcoming the difficulties heretofore experienced in photographing a corpse."[67] As Jalland notes, mourners kept these photographs in prominent positions within their homes.[68] Moreover, Christopher Rovee explains, just because photography is absent from *In Memoriam*

[66] As Daniel Novack has argued, Victorians understood photography "as a process that both dismembered the body and rendered photographic subjects abstract, anonymous and interchangeable." Daniel A. Novak, "Photographic Fictions: Nineteenth-Century Photography and the Novel Form." *Novel* 43, no. 1 (March 20, 2010): 23.

[67] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, p. 350.

[68] Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, p. 288.

does not mean that the poem does not fit into a history of photography. He writes, "At the nexus of materialism and spiritualism—and, crucially, upon (through) the surface of paper—*In Memoriam* functions as a kind of photographic negative, capable of resuscitating the fantastic body of Arthur Hallam."[69] The juncture of materialism and spiritualism occurs within a single word that Tennyson repeatedly uses to express a desire to represent the dead through the magic of light, a "flash." Scholars of photography have long located the language of early photography in nineteenth-century poetry. Jeffery Batchen, for example, points out how Coleridge, as a friend of photographers, uses it as a metaphor: "Creation rather than painting, or if painting, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash'd at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obscura."[70] Coleridge's verb—flashed—was a common one to describe early photography with its explosive light.

The term "flash" is both divine and technological, related to both epiphany and photography. However, it also conveys the desire to capture and hold the fleeting marks of a life, much like photography promised to do. Tennyson imagines himself as the camera obscura in Canto XVI, as he wonders if the shock of Hallam's death has

> . . . made me that delirious man
> Whose fancy fuses old and new,
> And flashes into false and true,
> And mingles all without a plan?[71]

Much of Canto XVI explores the tensions between oppositional forces. It asks if a person can be filled with both "calm despair and wild unrest." Coleridge had defined fancy as the mechanical joining of things, in contrast to the Imagination.[72] The flashing mind, then, brings together old and new images mechanically, but the flash, by definition, is also temporary, suggesting short moments of insight. The flash has often been read as a moment of divine inspiration—as "both the

[69] Christopher Rovee, "Secrets of Paper," *Word & Image* 30, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 388.
[70] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 1: 128; here, Coleridge refers to Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
[71] *In Memoriam*, XVI, 17–20.
[72] See Chapter 2 for more on this distinction.

language of revelation and of recollection"[73] according to Kate Flint, who reads "the flash" as an important marker of photography and memory in *The Romance of a Shop*.

Later in the poem, Hallam's "living soul" appears with a flash in Canto XCV. Tennyson describes a night when all the lights have gone out and he is left alone. Here, he imagines a space that transcends language. He can hear "the silent-speaking words" that "strangely spoke | the faith." This is a moment when the uncertain language of faith confronts doubt; it is this faith that allows a final meeting: "And all at once it seem'd at last | The living soul was flash'd on mine."[74] This is a moment of resurrection in the poem, in which the dead can interact with the living. The flash is divine, and to many Victorians, photography seemed divine as well; thus, this stanza is followed by one of divine unification:

> And mine in his was wound, and whirl'd
> About empyreal heights of thought,
> And came on that which is, and caught
> The deep pulsations of the world,[75]

This knowledge comes from a place deeper than the human mind, a place where Time, Chance, and Death originate. By the canto's end, the trance "was cancel'd, stricken thro' with doubt"[76] suggesting that his faith was not strong enough to maintain such a powerful divine connection. Of course, remembering the dead is a kind of historical thinking. "The past," as Walter Benjamin describes it, "can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again."[77] The camera's flash marks a moment's historicity just as it happens. One wonders what would have become of *In Memoriam* if Tennyson had photographs of Hallam. Perhaps the Butcher's Books would have taken on more physical fragments. Perhaps Tennyson would have compiled a scrapbook much like his own family would do in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

[73] Kate Flint, "Photographic Memory," *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* 53 (2009): 23.

[74] *In Memoriam*, XCV, 33–36.

[75] *In Memoriam*, XCV, 37–40.

[76] *In Memoriam*, XCV, 43–44.

[77] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 255.

When Tennyson died in 1892 his family built a sense of his presence with photographs that captured his likeness. Photography's rise positioned the scrapbook as an apposite medium for mourning. In recognition of the poet's great elegy, one of the family's scrapbooks featured the words "In Memoriam" stamped across its cover. Tennyson's family framed the poet laureate's portrait with newspaper clippings that record responses to his death. As such, these clippings are the final extracts of Tennyson's life and recover him not through his handwriting (as Hallam's family had done for Arthur), but through his photographic image. The Tennyson-family scrapbooks perform a similar function to commonplace books of mourning from earlier in the century. In addition to newsprint, the Tennyson family pasted telegraphs from royalty offering their condolences, photographs reprinted in newspapers, and cartoons featuring the poet. One page contains a photograph of Tennyson (reprinted with photolithography) surrounded by obituaries announcing his death and a sketch of his former residence. In contrast to more personal commonplace books like Julia Hallam's, these scrapbooks capture an entire nation of mourners. What commonplace books lost in immediacy, they gained in scope: with so much material to collect, scrapbookers paper over empty spaces and lose the subtlety that earlier commonplace books had commanded with their meaningful emptiness. While Hallam left behind no photographs, Tennyson left his family and friends with abundant images. Tennyson's photographic likeness appears everywhere in his family's scrapbooks as a way of simultaneously mourning and preserving him. The scrapbooks record the family mourning by collecting images that metonymically recall Tennyson's living presence. In this way, their collections perform a similar kind of grieving to what we have seen in Tennyson's Butcher's Books and Queen Victoria's commonplace book, but with different technologies of memory.

Coda

In the foregoing chapters, I have argued that epistemic frameworks and technological advances shaped commonplace-book form in nineteenth-century Britain. In this (necessarily brief) coda, I suggest how the same general principles apply to commonplacing in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. This is not an "afterlife" or a story of decline; rather, I explore an ongoing evolution of commonplacing and the *topoi* that continue to inform it. Here, I am especially interested in how the very concept of *topoi* recurs as a strategy for ordering and storing knowledge. Histories of commonplacing reveal that *topoi* have gone under many names: heads, *capita*, themes, places, topics, tropes, keywords. Whatever term we use, *topoi* aggregate patterns, themes, formulas, and organizational strategies in order to expand the capacity for human memory. In this way, the heads of a commonplace book are themselves an ancient *topos* about how technologies extend the potential of human cognition.[1] Commonplace books, as epistemic tools, help to structure thought processes. The heads of a commonplace book "have in them a kind of observation,"[2] as Francis Bacon wrote, that facilitates a process of making information useful; "idle heads," he wrote, lead to "idle notes."[3]

Closing historical studies with a look to contemporary implications is itself a concluding *topos*. And, certainly, the commonplace tradition

[1] See Marshall McLuhan for his influential discussion of how media extend human capabilities. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, reprint edn (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994).

[2] Francis Bacon, "Advice to Fulke Greville on his Studies," in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 103.

[3] Bacon, "Advice to Fulke Greville," p. 104.

How Romantics and Victorians Organized Information: Commonplace Books, Scrapbooks, and Albums. Jillian M. Hess, Oxford University Press. © Jillian M. Hess 2022. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895318.003.0008

resonates within our digital media-ecology as many of its *topoi* recur. Scholars have pointed out congruences among commonplacing, albums, scrapbooks, and digital social media. For example, Ellen Gruber Garvey likens scrapbooks to databases, but makes the salient point that "scrapbook links do not expire."[4] Ann Blair's very title (*Too Much to Know*) echoes current anxieties about "information overload." And Katie Day Good discusses our "personal media archives" that grow from commonplacing culture.[5] Yet, as Samantha Matthews cautions, we should not lose sight of historical specificity.[6] To say that commonplacing still informs contemporary information management is not to claim equivalency. As I have explored in these pages, the commonplace book's greatest strength has been (and continues to be) its ability to evolve.

While forms of commonplacing persist that would have been familiar to nineteenth-century figures (readers continue to collect quotations, and teachers ask students to keep commonplace books), many forms of digital commonplacing would seem entirely foreign to Romantics and Victorians. The historical specificity of our own moment—our media, epistemic virtues, and economic structures—support further evolutions of the commonplace method. While capitalist impulses certainly featured in nineteenth-century commonplacing culture (in pre-formatted and printed commonplace books, as well as school anthologies) we are living through a very different kind of capitalism—one that economists are still working to define. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: *topoi* have been deployed for prodigious profit. In our era of "surveillance capitalism," as Shoshana Zuboff recently termed it,[7] *topoi* have in them a different, more nefarious, kind of observation than the one Bacon noted. Now, our lives unfurl in electronic text. Our attention is for sale; we are a searchable corpus of information; and our dependence on technology has also made it so that our bodies are traceable. Examples of this abound: think of how the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has contracted with

[4] Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors*, p. 252.

[5] Katie Day Good, "From Scrapbook to Facebook: A History of Personal Media Assemblage and Archives," *New Media & Society* 15, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 557–573.

[6] Matthews, *Album Verses and Romantic Literary Culture*, p. 256.

[7] Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019).

Google or consider the National Security Agency's (NSA's) global surveillance program.[8] Doubtless, by the time this book goes to print, there will be new revelations about how our lives are enveloped by a massive panopticon built entirely of "writing." Caught in a limitless feedback loop of "the industrialization of writing," as Richard Seymour explains, we write more than ever, but our writing is also mediated more than ever within an electronically powered social industry: "It is about the code (the writing) which shapes how we use it, the data (another form of writing) which we generate in doing so, and the way in which that data is used to shape (write) us."[9] Far from the modes of production that structured nineteenth-century industrial capitalism, our economy is one of mental labor—"cognitive capitalism" to use Yann Moulier Boutang's phrase.[10]

Now, consider the great network of information that Google makes accessible through Search. The company presents its search engine as a super-charged library organized under keywords. At the time of this writing, Google's website informs users that "even before you search, Google organizes information about webpages in our Search index. The index is like a library, except it contains more info than all the world libraries put together."[11] Google explains its method with the benign example of dog adoption. A graphic of infinite library shelves follows, with several books on subjects highlighted in Google's signature primary colors: botany, math, and dogs. The book on dogs peeks out, as though all the information one might want on dog adoption exists within its pages. But this, of course, is a radical simplification. There is no simple congruence between what we want and what Search actually delivers. With massive indexes organizing sites according to keywords, Google's foundation of storing and sorting information had the potential for corruption from the very beginning. Indeed, when Sergey Brin

[8] See Randolph Lewis, *Under Surveillance: Being Watched in Modern America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

[9] Richard Seymour, *The Twittering Machine* (London: Verso Books, 2020), p. 23.

[10] Yann Moulier-Boutang, *Cognitive Capitalism*, 1st edn (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2012). See also Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside our Heads* (New York: Vintage Books, 2017) for another perspective on how cognition is monetized in the form of attention.

[11] "Google Search—Discover How Google Search Works," accessed January 24, 2021, <https://www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/>.

and Larry Page introduced the ideas behind Google as graduate students at Stanford University, they clearly envisioned how search engines could easily become "biased towards the advertisers and away from the needs of the consumers." This kind of marketing, they write, "is particularly insidious because even experts struggle to 'evaluate search engines.'"[12] These concerns are even more relevant today. Because the public turns to search engines as a central source of information, corporations have poured billions of dollars into highlighting their sites through "search-engine optimization" (SEO), which is linked to keywords. While the blinking text-cursor in the search-bar suggests the promise of user control, Search also has in it a "kind of observation" that delivers results derived from a proprietary algorithm created by people with their own quiet prejudices and economic motivations. As Safiya Noble has shown, even as users begin to type their own keywords, Google offers suggestions that are often laden with racist and sexist assumptions.[13] While individuals ostensibly choose their own terms, Google orchestrates the results that line our screen.

Of course, structures for organizing and storing information have never been without valid critique. As we have seen, inherited commonplace-book forms often sorted information in ways that were not always desirable. Locke, for example, broke with tradition when he recommended that readers choose their own general heads. For many of the authors featured in this book, the standard commonplace method was one to be overcome, to be used and then revised to fit individual needs—recall how Coleridge learned to find quotations in an anthology well before launching his fly-catchers and Faraday diligently filled his Lockean index before innovating his cut-and-paste index. Romantic epistemology suggests that writers must take ownership over their own thought processes and the topics that structure them before they can produce new knowledge. In short, every commonplacer—indeed, every thinker—must negotiate individual cognition with his or her community's epistemic structures. This has never been an easy thing to do, but it is perhaps more necessary now than ever before. As a culture, we

[12] Sergey Brin and Larry Page, "The Anatomy of a Search Engine," 1998, <http://infolab.stanford.edu/~backrub/google.html>.

[13] Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

seem to have unlimited faith in digital technology to solve both ancient and new problems. But this is a dangerous epistemic framework because our technologies are so easily corrupted for others' gain. The commonplace method has been and continues to be endlessly variable. Perhaps it is time for the method to undergo another revolution. Individually and collectively, we must take control of our systems for organizing and storing information. Or else, surrender control of the means by which information becomes knowledge.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

British Library

Eg. 2,154 *Scrapbook of Edward Raleigh Moran* (*c.*1830)
Add 3506 (1)–(3). *'Liber Aureus' of James Boyer, Headmaster at Christ's Hospital* (1783–1799)
Add 28720 *Commonplace Book of N.D.* (1800)
Add 40768 *George Eliot's Quarry for Romola* (1861)
Add 43702 *Commonplace Book of Sir Frederick Morton Eden* (1787–1802)
Add 45351 A-C *Commonplace Books of Jane Morris* (1885–1888)
Add 45848 *Commonplace Book of Florence Nightingale* (1836)
Add 47496-47550 *Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1794–1834)
Add 47590 *Commonplace Book of Samuel Rogers* (1823–1824)
Add 52360 *Commonplace Book of Horatia Nelson* (1819–1856)
Add 52621 *Commonplace Book of Thomas Hill* (*c.*1832–1837)
Add 56331 *Commonplace Book of Frances Crofts Darwin* (1895)
Add 56507 *Commonplace Book of Charlotte Shaw* (1897)
Add 60350 *Commonplace Book copied by Miss Elizabeth Scott afterwards Mrs. Williamson partly from a book belonging to the novelist Mrs. Charlotte Susan Maria Bury née Campbell* (1823–1824)
Add 59788 *Scrapbook of Emmanuel Roch compiled during the siege of Paris* (1870–1871)
Add 59866 *George Eliot's Blotter* (1868–1869)
Add 60515 *Commonplace Book of Anne Beanlands* (n.d.)
Add 61971 *Commonplace Books and Albums of Ernest Jones* (1843–1853)
Add 62089–62090 *Queen Victoria's Album Consolativum* (1862–1886)
Add 62688, 62669, & 62687 *Commonplace Books of Sir John Lubbock* (1850–1884)
Add 62916 *Religious Commonplace Book in Various Hands* (1832–1852)
Add 63118 *Commonplace Book of Edward Henry Blakeney* (1896)
Add 78162 *Scrapbooks of William Lovett* (1845–1848)
Add 79750 & 79751 *Commonplace Books of Sir James Robert George Graham* (1858)
Add 81297 *A Commonplace Book of Arthur Henry Hallam*
Add 81299 *Commonplace Book of Eleanor Hallam* (1834–1836)
Add 85409 *Commonplace Book of William Hamilton Maxwell* (1829–1831)
Add 85416 *Commonplace Book of* Henry Bird (1814)
Add 86106–86123. *Coleridge Family Papers; Silva Volumes* (1807–1829)

Add 81618 *Commonplace Book of Thomas Featherstone* (1837–1851)
Add 85414 *Commonplace Book of Edward Marshall and George Booth, R.N. of HMS Bellerephon* (1848–1850)
Add 85415 *Commonplace Book of Harriett Yonge* (1860)
Add 85426 *Anonymous Commonplace Book* (1897–1901)

Dove Cottage

DCMS 26 *Commonplace Book* (1800)
DCMS 120 *Notebook of Miscellaneous Material, Mostly in Dorothy Wordsworth's Hand* (1820v1836)

Folger Shakespeare Library

M.a. 5 *Commonplace Book of Lord Byron* (*c.*1815)
M.a. 13–14 *Commonplace Book of George Eliot; "Miscellaneous Extracts"* (1868–1870)
M.a. 14 *Commonplace Book of George Eliot; "Interesting Extracts"* (1868–1870)
D.a.2 *Commonplace Book of Washington Irving* (*c.*1810)
M.a.142 *Commonplace Book of Horatia Nelson* (1817)
M.a.145 *Anne Jackson Mathews's Commonplace Books* (1817–*c.*1859)
M.a. 180 *Commonplace Book of Elizabeth Gilichrist* (1800–1815)
W.b. 137–200 *Scrapbooks of J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps* (n.d.)
W.b.201–256 *Shakespeareana*. Scrapbooks of J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps (n.d.)
Y.d. 1119– 414 Scrapboxes of J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps (n.d.)
C.b.8 *Sotheby Scrapbook Concerning the Collier Controversy* (1859–1860)

Harvard Houghton Library

MS Eng 569.65 *Pot Pourri: or a Collection of Good, Bad, and Indifferent* (1791)
MS Eng 1168 *Antiquities, Biography, Poetry, etc. Commonplace Book of David Parkes* (1801)
MS Eng 692 *Commonplace Book of Thomas Ingoldsby* (1808)
MS Eng 767 *Commonplace Book of Felicia Hemans's* (n.d.)
MS Keats 3.4 *Scrapbook Compiled by Georgiana Augusta Wylie Keats and Others* (n.d.)
MS Keats 3.5 *Commonplace Book Compiled by Tom Keats* (1814)
MS Keats 3.13 *Commonplace Book Compiled by William Pitter Woodhouse* (1827)
MS Keats 3.1 *Commonplace Book Compiled by Richard Woodhouse* (1819)
MS Am 860 *A Common Place Book upon the Plan Recommended and Practiced by John Locke* by George Ripley (1822–1840)
MS Eng 952–952.2 *Commonplace Book of Cecilia Tennyson* (1832)

MS Eng 1461 *Benjamin Bailey Scrapbook* (1842–1844)
MS Eng 265.6 *Robert Southey Commonplace Books #'s1,4,15&31*
MS Eng 1353 *Commonplace Book of John Penwarne* (1830)
MS Eng 1122.2 *Notebook of Verse, Prose, and Drawings*. Mary Elizabeth Braddon (n.d.)
MS Eng 1122.5 *Notebook on Prose and Poetry*. M. E. Braddon (n.d.)
MS Eng 1122.7 *Cuttings and Extracts* M. E. Braddon (1852)
MS Eng 1122.8 *XVII Century Notes* M. E. Braddon (n.d.)
MS Eng 1122.9 *Notebook on 17th Century Subjects*. M. E. Braddon (n.d.)
MS Eng 1122.10 *Notebook on 17th and 18th century subjects*. M. E. Braddon (n.d.)
MS Eng 601.66 *Emma Moxon's Friendship Album*
MS AM 1922.1 (4) & (10) *Notebook of* Francis James Child (1846)
MS Am 1743.26(1), (5) & (6) *Commonplace Book of Sarah Orne Jewett* (1860–1868)
MS Lowell 13 *Quarry for Middlemarch* (1871–1872)

The Institution of Engineering and Technology

MSS 002/1/1 *Michael Faraday's Philosophical Miscellany* (1809–1810)
MSS 002/1/2 *Commonplace Book Vol. II, Michael Faraday*
MSS 002/1/3 *Lectures on Chemistry* (1816–1817)
MSS 002/1/4 *Michael Faraday's Lockean Commonplace Book*
SC MSS 2/1/5 *Chemical Notes, Hints, Suggestions and Objects of Pursuit* (1822)

London Metropolitan Archives

K/AR/01/14 *Scrapbook of Fanny Brawne*
K/AR/01/251 *Costume Plate Book of Fanny Brawne*
K/MS/01/046–51 *Commonplace Books of Thomazine Leigh* (6 vo.)
K/MS/01/045 *Commonplace Book of Benjamin Bailey* (1815–1816)
K/MS/01/044 *Commonplace Book of Benjamin Bailey* (n.d.)
K/MS/01/057–61 *Commonplace Books of Mary Leigh* (n.d.)
K/MS/01/059–60 *Commonplace Book of Maria Pearse* (1815)
K/MS/01/053–56 *Commonplace Books of Sarah Leigh* (1815–1816)

The Morgan Library and Museum

MA 390 *George Augustus Sala's Commonplace Book* (1859–1895)
MA 1581 *Beaumont Commonplace Book* (1803–1812)
MA 1916 *S.T. Coleridge's Autograph MS Commonplace Book* (*c.*1796)
MA 7334 *Sarah Hazlitt's Commonplace Book* (*c.*1820)

National Library of Scotland

Adv. MSS 35.4.16–17 *Miscellany of Antiquarian Papers Compiled by Richard Augustine Hay* (1725–1726)
MS 210 *Collection of Songs and Ballads*, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe (1824)
MS 874 *Volume Labelled "Mr Train" containing letters of Joseph Train and other letters and documents of historical and antiquarian interest addressed to or collected by Sir Walter Scott* (1817–1831)
MSS 877–911 *Abbotsford Collection of Walter Scott's Papers* (n.d.)
MS 1568 *Commonplace Book of Walter Scott* (1792)
MS 1631 *Scrapbook on the Death of Sir Walter Scott*
MS 2232 *Photocopy of Walter Scott's Adversaria*
MS 2660–2662 *Commonplace Books of John Stuart Blackie* (1891–1894)
MS 2720 *Commonplace Book of Richard Edgeworth*
MS 2141–2142 *Commonplace Book of Epitaphs* (1792)
MS 43411 *Commonplace Book of Augusta Leigh* (1796)
MS 31059 *Commonplace Book of Catherine Rutherford* (Selby)
MS 4334 *Commonplace Book with Manuscript Poems and Letters by Byron, Mary Shelley, Henry Richard Fox, and Walter Scott* (n.d.)
MS 43363 *Commonplace Book* of *Ada Byron* (n.d.)
MS 43369 *Commonplace Book of Augusta Leigh* (n.d.)
MS 43365 *Caroline Lamb's Album* (n.d.)
MS 43366 *Caroline Lamb's Commonplace Book* (1812)
MS 6110–6120, *Liddesdale Notebooks and Scrapbooks* by Robert Bruce Armstrong (1886–1889)
MS 8917 *Miscellaneous Notebook* of H. G. Aldis, the Bibliography (1884–1911)
MS 9493 *Papers of Alexander Turnbull Christie on the Geology of Europe* (*c*.1829)
MSS 23001–23041 *Walter Scott's Interleaved Set of the Waverley Novels* (n.d.)
MS 19769 *Scrapbook of John Blackwood Greenshields* (n.d.)

New York Public Library

Berg Collection

8v. *Commonplace Book of John Taylor* (1811–1833)
Commonplace Book of Richard Harris Barham (1826–1837)
Album of Mrs. Daniel Cresswell (1831–1843)
"Miscellanies" of George Eliot (1868)
Album of J. P. Kennard (n.d.)
Commonplace Book of Charles Lamb (n.d.)
Commonplace Book of Sarah Stoddart Hazlitt (n.d.)

Pforzheimer Collection

MS Bnd (Russell) v. 1–2 *Mary Magdelene Russell Albums* (1777–1821)
MS (MISC 4040) *Commonplace Book of Mary Cornwallis* (1784–1807)
MS (MISC 3964) *Keepsake Album of Anne Wagner* (1795–1834)
MS Bnd (Favell) *Caroline Favell Album* (1824)
MS (MISC 2583) *Harriet Caulfield Manuscript Material* (1827–1833)
MS (MISC 2586) *Commonplace Book of M. E. Crosby* (1830–1837)
MS Bnd (Hemans) *Commonplace Book of Felicia Hemans* (1830–1835)
MS (MISC 0707) *George Eliot's Miscellaneous Notes* (c.a. 1875)
MS (MISC 0711) *George Eliot's Miscellaneous Quotes* (n.d.)
MS (MISC 4041) *Album, "Original Compositions"* (ca. 1817–1886)

Princeton University Libraries

C0199 (no. 980) *Commonplace Book of Jane Smithson* (1797–1827)
C0199 (no. 842) *Anonymous Commonplace Book* (*c.*1800)
RTC01 (no. 73) *Commonplace Book of Walter Savage Landor* (*c.*1800)
C0938 (no.148) *Anonymous Commonplace Book* (1811)
C0199 (no. 497) *Commonplace Book of Sarah Housman* (1817)
RTC01 (no. 103) *Commonplace Book of Jane Georgiana Sheridan* (1825)
C0199 (no. 565) *Commonplace Book of Poetry and Drawings by the Knightley Family* (1830)
C0199 (no. 420) *Commonplace Book of Albinia Anne Garrick* (1833)
C0199 (no. 556) *Commonplace Book of Mary Lucas Kingsley* (1840)
C0199 (no. 290) *Commonplace Book of Dora Dick Browning* (1859)
C0171 (no. 90) *Commonplace Book of Kate Perry* (1871)

The Royal Institution of Great Britain

MS/HD/10–22 *Humphry Davy's Notebooks* (1799–1829)
MS/F/2/A–J *Michael Faraday's Laboratory Notes* (1820–1861)
MS/F/4A–B *Michael Faraday's Notes of Lectures he Attended* (1810–1842)
MS/F/4A–K *Michael Faraday's Notes for his Lectures* (1825–1862)
MS/N/1–2 *William Brande's Notebooks* (n.d.)

Shakespeare's Birth House Library

728-iii GL 12 (120 v) *James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps Scrapbooks* (*c.*1850)

Stanford University Libraries

MSS Codex 322 *Anonymous Commonplace Book* (1741–*c.*1820)
MSS M463 *Commonplace Book of John Nourse* (1794–1839)
MSS M567 *Anonymous Commonplace Book* (1820)
MSS Codex MO451 *Isabella Towers's Album* (1824–*c.*1850)
MSS Codex 0020 *Anonymous Commonplace Book* (1834–1859)
MISC 1005 *Commonplace Book of Fanny Kemble* (1842–1868)
MISC 766 *Anonymous Album* (1864)

Tennyson Archives, Lincoln Central Library

TRC/M/1 *Alfred Lord Tennyson's MS Notebook, Known as the Butcher's Book* (1842–1848)
TRC/N/1–2 *Travel Journals of Alfred Tennyson*
TRC/N/3 *Diary of Audrey Tennyson* (1885–1887)
TRC/N/10 *Natural History Notes of Emily Tennyson* (1856)
TRC/N/14 *Talks & Walks by Audrey Tennyson* (1870–1892)
TRC/N/15 *Notebook of Revd. George Clayton Tennyson, Louth* (1807)
TRC/N/16 *"Stories and Conversations taken down by me as a boy in an old Marlborough note book" by Hallam Tennyson*
TRC/N/27 *"Illness, etc" by Audrey Tennyson* (1892)
TRC/N/34 *JM Heath's Commonplace Book (notes)*
TRC/ DEATH PRESS CUTTINGS 1-4 *Tennyson Family Scrapbooks* (1892)

Trinity College, Cambridge University

The Fitzwilliam Museum

Commonplace Book of John M. Heath (1832)

The Wren Library

O.15.13 *"In Memoriam Manuscript Notebook"* (*c.*1842)

University of Pennsylvania Libraries

Ms Coll. 373 *Commonplace Book of Charles Baldwyn* (1802)
Ms Coll. 527 *Commonplace Book of Margaret Bewicke* (1811)
Ms Codex 221 *Commonplace Book of Sir John Taylor Coleridge* (1812)
Ms Coll. 618 *Commonplace Book of Benjamin Kirkham* (1820)
Ms Coll. 526 *Commonplace Book of John Francis Rogers* (1823–1825)

Yale University, Beinecke Library

GEN MS 963, IV.13 *School Notebook of George Eliot* (1834)
GEN MS 963, IV.13. 6 *Commonplace Book of George Eliot* (n.d.)
GEN MS 963, IV.15 *Memorandum by George Eliot* (1862)
GEN MS 963, IV.21 *Notebook Kept while Studying Kant* (n.d.)
GEN MS 2772 II *Anthony Trollope Collection: Commonplace Book with Notes on Books he Read* (2vols.) (ca. 1835)
Osborn fd5 [*Commonplace book*], [ca. 1815–1820]
Osborn d112 *Mary Baxter's Commonplace Book* (1828–1855)
Osborn fd56 *Mary Leman (Rede) Grimstone's Scrapbook* (1832)

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